

For MCG.

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What passes for post-graduate education in Louisiana

(the following is a little story I made up the morning my “case study” was due for Behavioral Modification 101, a course taken by the author in his [aborted] attempt to attain a Masters of Education graduate degree at Louisiana State University in Shreveport, LA)

I. Identification

This is a case study of an individual named Lambert Pawlikowski. Lambert is a Caucasian male adolescent, aged eighteen. He is a senior in high school, attending Rose High School in Shreveport, Louisiana. He lives at 1333 Coates Bluff Dr., in apartment #622, Shreveport, LA, 71104.

II. History of Family

Lambert has a Mother, Barbara; a father, Winslow; a younger sister, Caroline; & an older brother, Dean. Both parents graduated from college, & both went on to postgraduate study. Lambert’s father is a successful lawyer. Lambert’s mother is a Presbyterian minister. Socioeconomically, Lambert’s family is upper middle class.

Any sense of society for the family occurs at Church, where Lambert’s mother is a minister. Aside from church, there is no real societal group of which the Pawlikowskis are a part. However, Mrs. Pawlikowski participates in the PTA. According to Lambert, the family is fond of camping; he mentioned several instances of fishing with his father. Politically, the Pawlikowskis vote Democrat & consider themselves to be of liberal political persuasion. They are Scotch-Irish & there is a history of Heart Disease on both sides of the family.

III. History of the Case

One of the unavoidable bits of empirical data concerning Lambert, when you first meet him, is the stench of smoked tobacco. By Lambert’s estimate, he smokes between one-half & one full pack of cigarettes a day (Camel Lights). He doesn’t

remember the last time he woke up & didn't immediately reach for his pack of smokes. He doesn't remember the last time he visited a physician or a dentist. His teeth & fingernails are yellow-brown.

In terms of education, Lambert's has been normal with one major exception: he was expelled from private school at the end of 6th grade, for misbehavior. He began medication (Ritalin) & therapy in the 2nd grade & has since taken antidepressants, which he eventually decided were better suited to be flushed down the toilet than down into his stomach.

Lambert has been employed at several part-time jobs throughout his adolescence, working at an outdoors store, on a farm, babysitting, & working as an assistant chef at two restaurants. He does not have a girlfriend, but has dated several girls. He enjoys reading books, watching movies; Lambert plays both the guitar & the banjo. His influences are Bluegrass & Bob Dylan. When I asked Lambert about his personal philosophy or ideology, he didn't have a response. According to Lambert, he has "nothing to believe in."

IV. Diagnosis of Lambert: Underachieving Gifted Student

"I got kicked out of the private school that my parents had enrolled me in. We were forced to move to a different county so I wouldn't be bused to an inner city school. This was at the end of the 6th grade. I was notified that I would not be invited back the following year. I was a genuine nuisance."

Lambert Pawlikowski

Observing Lambert both obtrusively & unobtrusively, it is impossible not to notice his semi-prodigious vocabulary; obviously, he is a very intelligent young man. He is in all of the highest tracks for all of his classes, yet, when asked, Lambert responds that he is not intelligent. I asked him repeatedly. False modesty, one would expect, but not so in Lambert's case. Persistently, he displayed a general indifference to things academic, things involving the mind, intelligence. His parents are each well educated, continuously literate, & particularly erudite,

but that is the least of Lambert's concerns.

"I locked the gym teacher in the Happy House, the tin shed where they kept the balls that we played with in gym class...we were supposed to move this soccer goal & this kid was in the way & so I flipped the goal over on his head. He had to get stitches. I talked back to teachers."

Lambert Pawlikowski

John W. Santrock defines "controversial children" as those who are "frequently nominated both as someone's best friend & as being disliked" (Santrock, 2001, p. 189). Lambert has a number of close friends, but he mentioned many times "people don't like [him]." Given the provocative & rebellious events that transpired in the sixth grade, it is understandable that Lambert is liked by his peers because of his entertainment value, but disliked by those (like the poor boy who had a soccer goal dropped on his head) who took the brunt of Lambert's blows.

"Interviewer: Are you popular?"

Lambert: No. I don't play football."

Taken at face value, Lambert appears to have little concern for popularity. That isn't to say, however, that he doesn't strive for attention. According to Santrock, "Every adolescent wants to be popular" (Santrock, 2001, 188), even Lambert Pawlikowski. Behind his repeated controversial actions is a desire for the popularity that eludes him. Since he doesn't play football, Lambert diverts his attention & efforts to the realm of the controversial in an attempt, successful at times & unsuccessful at others, to wrest attention away from the football players & cheerleaders.

"Interviewer: Do you know any people your age that use alcohol?"

Lambert: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: How many?"

Lambert: I mean, this is off the record, isn't it?

Interviewer: Yes, this is confidential.

Lambert: I booze it up on the weekends. Everyone does.

Interviewer: Why does everyone drink?

Lambert: It's fun.

Interviewer: Where do you get the alcohol?

Lambert: I've got a friend who works at Exxon. We smoke pot too, boss.

Interviewer: Are your parents aware of this?

Lambert: No.

Interviewer: Would they be upset if they knew that you drink & smoke pot? You know that's illegal, right?

Lambert: Yeah, I know. & yeah, they would mind. Big time."

"Individuals are attracted to drugs because drugs help them to adapt to an ever-changing environment. Smoking, drinking, & taking drugs reduce tension & frustration, relieve boredom & fatigue, & in some cases help adolescents to escape the harsh realities of their world...Drugs are taken for social reasons also, allowing adolescents to feel more comfortable & to enjoy the company of others."

(Santrock, 2001, p.461)

According to Lambert, adolescents (like a lot of adults) live through the weekdays just so they can make it to the weekend where they can get drunk or high & "hang out." When I read aloud to Lambert the passage cited above from Santrock, the boy described how boredom pervades his life, how there is "nothing to do here." Thus, in Lambert, we find the prototypical contradiction of the anticonformist: A lot of what motivates him is a desire to disrupt expectations, to avoid peer & norm pressure;

yet no matter what Lambert does, his behavior can be explained, his behavior can be attributed to some kind of peer or normative pressure. Lambert, like other anticonformists, removes himself from the pull of one set of values & immediately finds himself the slave to a new set of values (Santrock, 2001, 188, 199).

“I think cliques form just so everybody can be as far away as possible from the people that really piss them off.” –Lambert Pawlikowski

Surprisingly, despite all the information I’ve relayed about Lambert so far, he is also a Boy Scout, & will more than likely be an Eagle Scout before the end of his senior year of high school—an astounding feat, especially for someone who was kicked out of school & was medicated for both hyperactivity as well as depression. Boy Scouts is the only formally organized peer group of which Lambert finds himself a part. Most of his closer friends, on the other hand, are a part of **zero** organized peer groups.

Santrock writes, “The peer group is a ‘way station’ between relinquishing childhood dependence on parents...Group affiliation & acceptance by the clique is important in keeping the adolescent’s self-concept positive during this long transition period” (Santrock, 2001, 203). It is interesting, considering the widely held connotation of ‘cliques’ as negative, that in a world with increasingly less & less interpersonal connections being made, the adolescent’s world may become increasingly difficult as a result of **not being a part** of a clique.

V. Recommendations

“I’m closer to my mother. She’s around more, I guess. Dad is never around. & when he does come home, he just takes a bottle of wine into his office & I still never see him. Even when he’s home, I don’t see him.”

Lambert Pawlikowski

If one had to assume the form of a reductionist & reduce all of the complexities of Lambert’s personality to one uniting

factor, it would more than likely be his father. Lambert loves his father, as when he says, “He’s really smart. He could be doing anything. I just think he’s bogged down by his job as a lawyer.” Contrariwise, Lambert hates his father, as evidenced by their constant arguments & this statement from Lambert: “Dad’s a waste of space.”

“In developing emotional autonomy, adolescents increasingly de-idealize their parents, perceive them as people rather simply as parenting figures, & become less dependent on them for immediate support.”

(Santrock, 2001, 159)

So far, we’ve discussed the goings-on of Lambert’s peer life; what we haven’t considered is the life Lambert leads with his parents. Certainly the issue of autonomy is present. Lambert is a senior in high school & is very excited about the prospects of college. “It’ll be a lot cooler. Maybe a little harder. But I’ll be able to do whatever I want, whenever I want.”

As evidenced by his interactions with peers, Lambert craves attention. Not getting enough attention from his father would certainly cause ripples in the waves of Lambert’s personality disorders. According to Lambert, his parents fit the model of the authoritarian parents, featuring “a restrictive, punitive style in which the parent exhorts the adolescent to follow the parent’s directions” (Santrock, 2001, p.155). The link between authoritarian parenting & antisocial or socially incompetent behavior is strong. It is my recommendation that Lambert & his parents engage in a standard role-reversal group therapy session. Lambert would be able to express his grievances in such a way that his parents (his father in particular) would be able to understand how he could work to change. Anything that could get Lambert & his father together would be a step in the right direction, as it is attention that I feel Lambert desires.

“Interviewer: Do you think you’ll start a family of your own someday?”

Lambert: No, I don’t reckon.

Interviewer: Then what will you do?

Lambert: Maybe start a band, sing some songs. Maybe write a screenplay. Try to join the CIA or the FBI. I've always wanted to do that."

When I asked Lambert if he'd ever had an identity crisis, he gave me a look like I had asked him a question that was too heavy. He has either perfected the philosophy of stoicism or else he has perfected the act associated with stoicism; either way, it is impressive. Within that stoicism, however, if there is a single crack it relates to multi-potentiality, which eventually leads to identity crisis, whether Lambert knows this or not. Santrock writes, "There are literally hundreds of roles for adolescents to try out, & probably just as many ways to pursue each role...vocational roles are central to identity development, especially in a highly technological society like the United States" (Santrock, 2001, p.307).

*"The effort of adolescents to avoid failure have been grouped as **self-handicapping strategies** (Urden, Midgely, & Anderman, 1998). That is, some adolescents deliberately do not try in school, put off studying until the last minute, fool around the night before a test, & use other self-handicapping strategies so that if their subsequent performance is at a low level, these circumstances, rather than lack of ability, will be seen as the cause."*

(Santrock, 2001, p. 437)

When asked about his study habits, Lambert replied on two separate occasions: "I don't study." One of the major problems regarding self-handicapping strategies is that the adolescent essentially withholds valuable information from the society surrounding him or her - that same society upon which the self-handicapping student will soon rely for his livelihood. Lambert is at a disadvantage directly now & indirectly in the future. Presently, as a result of self-handicapping, Lambert surely performs at an academic level lower than what it would be, were he to perform to his highest abilities. As a result of

lower grades, less participatory involvement, & a general malaise, Lambert handicaps himself out of such probable advantages as: 1.) being accepted into a top-tier college or university; 2.) building a resume that will assist him in attaining gainful employment (*realistic stage of career choice*); & 3.) becoming involved with the various communities around him instead of going deeper and deeper inside (Santrock, 2001, p. 439).

“Interviewer: Have you ever thought about suicide?”

Lambert: Yeah, quite a bit. I’ve been medicated since the second grade.

Interviewer: With what?

Lambert: First, with Ritalin. & then later with anti-depressants. I guess around my freshman year I started thinking about suicide.

Interviewer: Why did you think of killing yourself?

Lambert: I don’t know. I was kind of miserable about everything, really.”

According to Santrock, “The rate of suicide has tripled in the past 30 years in the United States; each year, about 25,000 people take their own lives,” many of them depressed adolescents (Santrock, 2001, p. 480). I informed Lambert that suicide was one of the top three leading causes of adolescent deaths (Santrock, 2001, p. 92); he was not surprised, although he has never known a person who committed suicide. Certainly in meeting Lambert & becoming aware of his being diagnosed with depression, it struck me that he might be a case susceptible to suicide. With his admission of having thought of suicide, it seems even more plausible. Yet, one cannot help but see, amidst all the turmoil of depression, suicidal thoughts, & psychopharmacology, a core to Lambert that could, one hopes, come out on top.

“Metacognition means cognition about cognition, or ‘knowing about knowing.’”

(Santrock, 2001, p. 121)

What Lambert lacks in disciplined academic study & pro-social behavior, I maintain he makes up for with his incisive metacognitive & self-regulatory learning abilities. For example, Lambert considers himself (& used the term appropriately) an autodidact, or one who seeks to educate oneself, as opposed to being educated in the confines of one particular institution. At the time of our last interview, Lambert was reading *Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoevski, *The Dharma Bums* by Jack Kerouac & a book on philosophy by Friedrich Nietzsche—this is in addition to his normal course load at school.

In a way, Lambert is like a diamond in the rough—full of potential, but not yet applying in it any discernible direction. If however we in the adult community look hard enough, we will see that a lot of the ‘underachievers’ like Lambert, whom we know to have potential, aren’t simply wasting it—potential doesn’t disappear, it just hides in little niches where we’d never think to look. Lambert is a very young man; only time will tell if my hopeful predictions about him are accurate, but I for one see through the outward turmoil & inside the mind of a young & gifted adolescent.

All we do is recycle ideas

First, grasp the ideas; second, hoard them (as many as possible); dead white European male ideas mostly, but also the bizarre, the incidental, the feminine, the non-white, the personal even.

Commingle with the ideas; stew them in your trusty cranial melting pot.

Hoard - cram - stew - & who knows. Aristotle says the most euphoric activity is pure thinking. He says that this is what God is - pure thinking - or thinking on thinking.

So there I was, in the attic, birds scratching something fierce on the shingles. An otherwise insipid exurban afternoon.

Living rent-free with my parents/housemates after my first failed foray into the *orbis terrarum mundus*. Safe in the confines of my *mundus imaginalis* & free from the hassle of bills, insurance, mingling with the unwashed masses, &c.

I would write in the attic for a few hours a day, when I wasn't drunk & reading Faulkner novels. I bought yellow legal pads when I heard of Howard Hughes's fascination for them, but unlike Hughes I bought the miniature kind so that I'd fill pages more easily & get my endogenous chemical satisfaction with as little actual accomplishment as possible - trick the old noggin into doling out the serotonin.

It was the 4th of July, my mother's favorite holiday. We'd finished entertaining some of the local aldermen & other well-to-do neighbors at our semi-humble Mcminimansion. I was writhing in the electricity of juicy gossip, character flaws, & soap opera

intrigue amongst the middle-aged Westchester set. I got drunk on mid-quality champagne & stole away to the attic as things began to die down.

A storm was brewing & I mean that literally (no more of the new age consciousness metaphors & latin catch phrases, scout's honor). The power went out & it quickly became hot & dark. I sought out my mini book-light & went outside to the gazebo.

I wrote twenty pages in the dark, in the misty post-drip of the storm. The fog rolled in & I felt adventurous as Hemingway & high as Coleridge - for an hour.

It was a magnificent piece of craftsmanship - those twenty pages - a disjointed, postmodern pastiche/what Basquiat would write had he written short stories - set up as an elaborate novel of manners concerning the Westchester elite - members of the law community, the medico-pharmalogico-cartel & all, in addition to the upstart skateboarding mogul & the county's megalomaniacal Dry Cleaning King.

But all that is prelude, or should I say masquerade. In reality, the manners were but allegories to the most radical political philosophy ever published in the mainstream. This radical neo-atavistic socialist demogaguery was so buried, so finely shaded & nuanced & mandarinized - so stuffed inside the thanksgiving turkey of the allegory of the charmingly indiscreet bourgeoisie of Westchester - that even the satirized publisher who's anagrammatic double was the novel's villain would publish my work without a second thought.

All is vanity. Of course the haves & the powers that be would buy a book about themselves & even publish it & then, ten or twenty years later, an adorable nebbish of a literary scholar, toiling away at a small desk in some musty basement of a library at some third-tier liberal arts college would come across the story, decode it using the Joyce-Proust alchemist's stone & the world would erupt in peaceful revolution.

I'd be long dead, content that I'd successfully changed the world without firing a shot.

My contentment with the story deflated as quickly as the high school athlete's ego, upon realizing that he's too short & skinny to ever play professionally - that he'll have to toil at a real job in the real world, scrounging for orgasms like loose change on the mysterious & grimy floor beneath a vending machine like the rest of the peasants.

& then a black man approached, as one inevitably does in my stories. He came through the bamboo forest in back of my familial estate. I wondered aloud, in a hushed tone so he couldn't hear: "Don't we have security for this kind of thing?"

MacGuyver's On

(The following was originally submitted when the author was a Freshman in college as an exercise for his intro to creative writing class.)

(If the author were less lazy, he might have adjusted the margins on the following. But he assures you that the words in boldface at the beginning of each line were lined up one on top of the other in whatever font size used at the time of submission.)

(Also, Richard Dean Anderson, as of this writing, is a presumably proud member of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society & has worked with members of Earth Rivers Expeditions to Produce River Project.)

Reports from overseas tell us that casualties may number in the thousands &

of the American fighters, only hundreds have survived - "Ed, pass the salt. & get

my shirt from out the dryer while you're--" - "Do I look like your mother? Since her

death it seems like so. What's up widdat? Getchown damn shirt." - "Ed,

have you seen how much work I have to do tonight? Work, work, work - s'all I

been doing all day long. I've got a report due in Rainey's office by noon &--" - "That's

great Lee, but I take care of Kim & did you see the 30-foot tree I dragged in?" - "Don't

exaggerate Ed. It's not even 20 feet tall. Besides, Kim can take care of..."

"**It's** the greatest television show ever! Richard Dean Anderson rules. How can you

not love *MacGyver*?" - "Shhh...Kim is trying to sleep."

MacGyver's entertaining. I'm sure

that you get loads of enjoyment delui. But couldn't you watch something intellectual?" - "I'm learning so much, you don't even know. I bet I can hot-wire a car, Ed, can you?" - "**Afraid** I can't, Lee. I do make \$30k a year while you take your paycheck

to the horsetrack." - "So what does that have to do with learning?" - "Lee you'll

die before you come close to being as smart as me. Why don't you open a book?" -

"I, I, I'll do what I want. Now shut up, *MacGyver's* on." - "Lee, I'm **just** trying to help you out. You've got to realize some of your potential.

Don't become a professional fuck-up!" - "Is there something you don't understand? I

want to watch *MacGyver*. That's all. Can you respect my desires, please?" -

"**To** answer your question, Lee, I can respect your desires. I respect you. But you could

be such a success, I wonder if you know that. Do you?" - "Ed, just get off my back!" -

"**There.** I'll leave. Watch *MacGyver*. Whaddo I care?" - "Yeah, exactly...one day,

when I'm rich & famous, then you'll see my freaking potential." - "I hope so. I'm sure that

it will all work out for you. I just wish you would work a little harder is all." - "Ed it just so

happens that I work hard all the time, you just never see it..."

"**Dying** in the carnage was former Philadelphia Eagles player, Tim White..." - "Lee,

is this today's newspaper?" - "What the hell do I know? Is there a date on it?" - "What

an absolute tragedy? Did you hear about Tim White?" - "Don't you have some

art to sell or whatever it is you --" - "Yeah, I'm going. I can't just come & go as I please

like you do. I'm just going to check on Kim before I...can you handle

everything tonight all by yourself? I do appreciate it." - "Yeah, sure. There's nothing

else to do..."

"**Children** were removed from the hospital wreckage by the dozens..." - "Lee?

Are you awake? Lee!" - "Yeah, what?" - "I'm leaving now. Thanks for watching Kim." -

"**Given** the fact that you left me no choice, you're welcome. Don't worry about

us. We'll entertain ourselves. I'm sure the poor girl doesn't get much of a chance

to do that with you around. We'll play Monopoly or whatever." - "I don't want to

discourage you Lee, but Kim doesn't like you all that much. She thinks you're mean.

Our emergency numbers are to the left of the phone, OK? I'll see you..." - "Yeah, you'd

better leave before you actually hurt my feelings or anything. It's like you think I lack

emotions or something. I ain't the brightest bulb, but I got feelings..."

"**In** other news, consumer confidence plummeted in May...Hey hey shoppers, don't

delay! Get down to Pete's Used Cars & Trucks now for the sale of the century, only..." -

"**There** are board games in the living room closet, Uncle Lee. & dad

lies when he says I hate you. I don't." - "What? Who's there?" -

"It's Kim. Look, I

know what my dad said to you. It's not true. You wanna play a game?" - "There's

plenty we could do, take it easy. Did you have a nice nap?" - "I was having a dream &

then you & dad woke me with your fighting." - "I'm just waiting for the pizza guy to

come." - "Uh-huh. My dream was awesome, too. There's this boy in class - I want to

kiss him so bad. & he was about to kiss me...but y'all had to yell." - "It was Ed, not

me. Your father is going thru a lot right now. He wasn't exactly in a

sweet mood this evening." - "Let's set up the game, Uncle Lee. We got monopoly.

& we can set it up while the pizza gets here." - "Ok. We're all set then. We've got about

twenty minutes till it gets here...tell me about that boy." - "Huh? No." - "I know that

youth's a tough time. I've been there. I know what you're..." - "I got my report card

a week ago." - "How'd that turn out?" - "Oh! & Last week a truck dropped a box full of

stuff on the road. All kinds of cool stuff. My friends & I split it up & all...I think I

will be the thimble, OK?" - "Fine." - "I'm usually the hat, but it's been bad luck so I'm

not going to be the hat this time." - "I find that the horse is a consummate winner. He'll

endure all kinds of trouble on the board." - "Ha! Wait, I'm going upstairs, be right back."

The coroner's office said that it was an accident. "How can I help, officer?" -

"**Most** you can do right now, sir, is to stay out the way. Stand behind the line. It's

essential that we secure the area. Please, sir." - "Yeah, just watch out for that. It was a

gift from the set of *MacGyver*. Is she going to be okay?" - "The doctors have her now." -

"**For** the love of Christ people, what's going on? Who's in charge of all this? Point me to

a captain or sergeant or whatever." - "Sir, please stay back." - "Look there she is.

Good. Doc? She needs her inhaler. Here. Take it." - "Excuse me sir, I'm a

writer from the local weekly. Can I get a few words..." - "Good. Thank you Doc.

Is that her mouth moving. Oh thank Jesus." - "Lee what's up?" - "Ed, i'm so glad you--"

"**A** bad thing happened. Kim's all right, I think. Come here. It's gonna be OK. That

built-in smoke detector upstairs came thru tonight." - "What? A fire? Lee!" - "A

shock-proof circuit in the wall upstairs wasn't so shock-proof." - "How'd she get out?" -

"**Shit**, shit, shit, shit, shit. I got her out. I got her. I, I, I heard the thing beeping, the smoke

detector, & I went upstairs & & & smoke was everywhere. I couldn't see a thing..."

I had a dream last night

(originally published in the Rhodes College newspaper in the Fall of 2001.)

I went on a game show, a lot like the trivia game in *Quiz Show* — “Twenty-One.” I was on the show, but I wasn’t competing alone. I was on a team with the entire world population — all of Earth’s humans.

The green room was crowded.

We had won the show so many times that, like Herbie Stempel in *Quiz Show*, everyone was getting lackadaisical about the show — not practicing, farting around like a bunch of retired professional athletes, watching music videos, cable news, Sportscenter, & old episodes of the Jay Leno show.

In the first match I was privy to enjoy, we were pitted against a group from the planet Shotput-86 — a bunch of half-wits; Stephen Hawking out-scored them by himself, scoring 18 of our 21 points.

We went on to beat teams from all over the Universe, going on a winning streak that lasted millions of years. Throughout the streak, however, apathy became more & more the predominant disposition of the team.

One night I finally had enough of it; I stormed into the green room before the show. Everyone from Earth was in rapt attention, watching *Forrest Gump* 3.

I lashed out at them, telling them they never knew who was going to come on the show next, that it could be a species a million years more evolved than us, with brains the size of Texas.

I never thought I’d use “brains” in the same sentence as “Texas,” but desperate times called for desperate measures. I asked them if they knew what would happen if we lost.

“What would happen?” asked Jennifer Lopez.

“It’s not an ordinary game show,” I told them. “On an ordinary show, you would be kicked off the game when you lost & would

not come back. When you lose here, you don't get kicked off the show so much as you get kicked off the curved face of the universe!"

...At this point, after having informed Team Earth of the whole game-show-loser-genocide-deal, my dream played one of those intra-dream tricks on me...

In a spasm of inattention — maybe I woke up for a second or, more likely, a malicious demon distracted me — the facts of the dream were suddenly altered.

It turns out that instead of dominating the show for millions of years, we hadn't appeared on the show at all. Our matches were mere rehearsals.

Only now are we going on the real show for the first time. Those three million years we had spent thinking we were on the show were actually a simulation, designed for us so that we could get good enough to where we could actually play on the real show.

Team Earth, I find out, has always known we were just practicing & they still don't care about the consequences of losing.

The dream ends & I wake up without seeing our first appearance on the real show. The last image I have of my dreamed Team Earth is of Britney Spears & my high school chemistry teacher contented as cows & cudding on their cheese curls, gorging on Diet Pepsi.

Three million years to prepare & I'm convinced they got their asses handed to them by whatever team they faced.

The world is in fervor these days — our children donate their time & their money left & right, giving blood, acting kinder than usual; we carry flags; we think about what the flag means; we watch the news for up-to-date info on Bin Laden, the taliban, or highlights from George II's last crappy speech.

It seems to me that Team Earth is a lot more active than we were before September 11.

Everywhere creative solutions are being devised to deal with sudden changes & challenges to our previous way of life.

Congress "finds" trillions of dollars for the campaign called "anti-terrorism", & there's only more to come.

Team Earth now has a reason to get creative, to get up off our

lazy butts. The threat of losing certain things is finally palpable. Terrorism is one of many issues challenging the real Team Earth. Let us hope our team works harder than the one in my dream.

Let's not kill each other in the process either — this is Team Earth, right? Or is it just Team America? Or Team Christian?

Floccinaucinihilipilification

(Or, “She may not be the best screw I’ve ever had, but she’s not bad as far as insight goes.”)

So this girl - this idiot - I think she mighta been retarded or something - she's out on the side of the fuckin highway at tree in da morning - I'm out on I-40 runnin Knoxville to Memphis & then Dallas - anyways I pick her up & fore I ave time to get back inna 2nd she's askin' me all kindsa questions like do I think the world is getting more cruel or more humane - do I think the World Trade Center was blown up by Muslims or Karl Rove? - I couldn't make heads or tails of her - she just ended up answerin her own questions - the world is both crueler & more humane than it was fiddy years ago whatever that means - & it weren't da Muslims but Dick Cheney & the Jesuits (trick question) - *what?!? bitch was crazy man you don't even know* - aight forget about Cheney I says - I gotta say somethin i figure - how can the world be more cruel & & & more humane, that dont make no sense - you can't have both - people can't make up their minds these days i'll tell you dat much - pansy ass culture - see it all the time - reminds me a those gray-haired gray-suited middle management types - the kind you see in the movies - grab their newspaper on the way to their numbskull jobs - drinking their coffee - eating their snickers candy bars - that's fine - I aint knockin routine or nothing by no means - routine can be good for some folk.

So this girl - we eventually ended up gettin a motel room together - just for one night - don't ask me how that happened - the sex was fine - she insisted on the missionary position, which - she cried on my shoulder - said she hated her life - said she's just waiting for it to end so she can see what's next - I didn't have the heart to tell her that this is it - a drag, really - sometimes I think I'm a psychic vampire, just sucking on the life-force of other people & then thinking the way they do - cuz that girl was like almost a week ago & I've been depressed ever since - maybe this is true for everyone - I dunno - I dunno that many people - I'm always on the road, in the truck - sure I've got buddies on the short-wave, on the CB, &c - but but but I guess sometimes you can't help but be affected by bullshit in other people's lives - like my 70 year old dad deciding to have an affair - now I have to talk

to my mother every other day - ever since she kicked dad out the house, she's been obsessed with her *Oxford English Dictionary* - told me about a word the other day - floccinaucinihilipilification - she said some consider it the longest word in the english language - she said she's reached the floccinaucinihilipilification of life - which is to say that she's utterly disgusted - just like that hitchhiker girl I slept with last week - disgusted to the point where life is valueless - I decided to cash in on vacation time & visit my folks in Fargo.

On my way up there I picked up a guy on I-55 outside St. Louis - told me he was on his way to Hollywood, via Madison, Wisconsin - said his idol was Burt Reynolds except he couldn't grow a mustache - something about too much estrogen in the water - that boys today have like half as much testosterone & sperm count as their grandfather's generation - I've never seen a Burt Reynolds movie - I saw him in that cop show a long time ago - we talked about my parents - he apologized for their troubles, which I didn't understand & we drove in silence the rest of the way - I wonder if he thought it was weird when I dropped him off & then made an illegal U-turn, heading back the way I came - I think his name was Cody or Ira.

The roads had been straightening out - I became glued to the line of the horizon - I was tired & breathing had become tedious - I stopped at a cheap motel & watched Cinemax till six in the morning when the truckers started up their cantankerous diesel engines - slept for a couple-three hours - stayed in bed & got frustrated cuz I couldn't get back to sleep - when the sun was high enough to blind me thru the broken venetian blind setup, I decided to go for a walk & clear out my mind - fresh air & whatnot - surreally, as I closed the door behind me, I saw on the horizon, that chick I slept with last week - the hitchhiker - that couldn't be her, I thought - what the hell is she doing out here - thought I was crazy - thought i was in some stupid M. Night Shyamalan movie - I wanted to tell her that her question was ridiculous - the one about the world being cruel or humane - it's a trick question - I started jogging, to catch up with her but I grew wary & stopped - thought about calling my parents but I didn't - realized I was hungry & wondered if there was a diner within

walking distance.

Waitress's name was Flo - I told her the world wasn't getting any more cruel, that it was always cruel - the way she poured my coffee, I knew she agreed with me - so I told her that the world wasn't getting any more humane either - she rolled her eyes - my mother called & I let it go to voicemail - she said that dad was moving back to the house - that it was just too late to start over - to look for someone else to - that they'd rather sit around & wait for the end, together - the bathroom was filthy so I took a shit out behind the diner - wiped my ass with a bunch of paper placemats.

Freedom to do nothing means everything

A few days ago, the Creator of the Universe was playing *Halo* online against 13-year-old boys when She looked up & discovered that the only free-thinking creature in the Universe had disappeared from her Free-Thinking Radar Detector.

That morning—the morning of the disappearance—I went to see the Creator. She was so distraught that she instructed me to deliver this message:

“You are the only creature in the Universe with free will. Your Creator has surrounded you with an assortment of robots, designed to provide you with the widest possible range of experience. It is *The Truman Show*, only no Ed Harris, & your Creator can do a lot more than make stormy weather.”

I am one of the robots provided by the Creator for your benefit. My name is IP Free-86 which stands for Information-Providing Robot. I am employed in order to provide you with certain information that you might be too busy otherwise to find for yourself. Read this newspaper whenever you can—I will check in periodically, whenever charged by our Creator to do so.

The first thing I want to tell you has to do with the particular crowd of robots that our Creator suspects of having surrounded you, of having temporarily deleted your free-thinking mind, namely a certain sect of W robots.

In the robot business, W stands for warp.

Warping robots are distinguished by their strong beliefs & are designed with one intention: to implant their beliefs in you by whatever means necessary—thus warping your mind. These W-robots aim to contort your beautiful free-thinking brain in such a way as to make it conducive to their particular ideas and injurious to opposing thoughts.

According to our loving/hating Creator, the free mind she gave you (and only you), was built with the potential to hold any belief, to choose & to act out any of the infinite possibilities in her Universe. It seems that certain W-robots sought to take that gift from you & are now making your choices for you.

Day in day out, every time you hear the Haley Joel Osment/A.I. voice of a robot around you—be it your friend, acquaintance, or any other—you have more than likely been exposed to a W-robot. I would tell you that these Warpers are conspiring against you & your freedom, but robots cannot conspire. Furthermore, all robots are not evil. Some are extremely helpful & freedom-encouraging. All that surround you are robots, but not all are Warpers.

But back to the W's.

What they are really good at, these W's, is getting stuck on certain thoughts & modes of thinking; oftentimes, they repeat themselves like a broken record. I am sure that you have experienced the Parent Warper's incessant cry of "Do your homework! Clean your room! Get off your lazy ass! Do not hang out with those people! Get good grades! Go to college! (You're here, aren't you?) Get married! Make lots of money! Find a church! Raise 2.2 kids! Raise them in the church!"

Are you making a checklist? Or have you done that already?

They usually stop there. Once you have raised your kids in a nice church, they will remit. That is when they will let you run wild. But you'll be 60 or 70 years old by that point, & while I know that retirement gets more fun every day, living like a spastic squirrel tied to a tree in Miami, juiced up on Prozac, Viagra, and margaritas isn't my idea of the good life.

But whatever gets you off.

Those parental Warpers are the worst, but the saddest thing is that they are the norm for the American-style of robot. Not only does each individual W-robot sound like a broken record, when you get a bunch of them together, all W's of the same sect repeat the same song.

My internal video screen is conjuring an image of everyone walking around with a boom box on their shoulder playing John Tesh. It's a duet. With Gianni.

If I were capable (as only you are) of being intrigued, I would be intrigued by your free decisions. After all, the robots have no choice but to follow the programs built-in to their machinery. American Warpers generally & genuinely follow this 3-step program: education, moneymaking, child-rearing.

On the other hand, with your free choice—considering just how many options you have before you in the realm of infinite freedom—the odds of you deciding to follow that same route (school, \$, family) are approximately 988 billion-to-one.

And I'm a robot, so trust that math.

I guess I should not be surprised that you aligned so closely with the unthinkers. Nine-hundred-&-eight-eight billion-to-one? All things are possible with our Creator!

What is so surprising about 988 billion-to-one? However unsurprising it is, the fact remains that our Creator, the inspiration for all that is, can no longer tell the difference between your free-thinking self & the plethora of unthinking robots surrounding you.

Hence our situation: you no longer show up on the radar. Where the hell are you?

The Universe is a marvelous thing, fraught with such probabilities, improbabilities, & potentialities that must surely make your free-thinking head spin whenever you think about it. & to be so blessed as to be the only free-thinker in a world of unthinkers, the Creator must have big plans for you.

My objective is to bring out that freedom in any way possible, so you'll show up again on the radar. I have been programmed to suggest certain options that might trigger a free thought in your mind. Monotonous machines have surrounded you for so long; they never told you that you are capable of choosing anything you want to, did they? Usually, Warkers will tell you to do something, but they will not tell you why. They say, "Just do it! No questions!"

Listen carefully: you DO NOT have to go to class tomorrow morning. Why not go to New York or Nashville instead? In a world of possibilities, I cannot compute the odds of your choosing, every single morning, to go to class & to do the same things you do every day. But you have, & you choose this life again & again & again & again.

As a result, you are lost in a crowd of dull, gray, woolen sheep. Your Creator has lost you. Frightened, caught in the middle, hot & sweaty, bursting at the seams to get out into the great wide open. Oh, how you itch for the shepherd to come * shave your wooly locks, to let you go.

HEY! If you are happy inside your crowd of woolen robots, KEEP IT UP. Don't worry about me & what I'm saying. I'm sure God has accounted for this contingency. Being happy is great & I don't blame you for wanting to stay happy. I hear happiness is rad.

BUT BUT BUT do not forget your nature. Do not forget the possibilities you might miss by disregarding your free mind.

Don't know what to do for your first official act of freedom? Why not try & do the exact opposite from what you would normally do? It's a start, no?

How about that totally weird thing in the back of your mind that you have always been afraid to do because the robot society would judge you as a deviant? Do it! What will the robots care? Moreover, why do you care about robots? Even if the robots that I malign were other free-thinkers, they sure don't act like it—they look & act like robots—so what's the difference?

Try things; try everything until you find something you like, & maybe it will be the same thing you were doing already, but maybe not.

Run out of things to try? Can't think of anything to ATTEMPT? Why not attempt to do NOTHING?

One of the things I hear American Warping robots saying over & over again is, "(gasp!) Apathy is horrible. Do something, anything, instead of NOTHING. (gasp!) Idle hands are the devil's plaything. (gasp!)"

What do they know about apathy except for what they've heard about on 20/20? Got nothing to do, literally? Settle down & do nothing. Even doing nothing is something.

Ask a robot what to do. I know I told you how scary they could be, how they can warp you, but not all robots are of the warping kind, remember. Look at me.

In fact, it might be a fun act of freedom to seek out all the non-Warping robots & befriend them. If you choose.

I could not begin to compute the effort it will take you to make just one magnificently free decision. My best wishes to your future—to your many free decisions.

Until we speak again, I remain your Information-Providing servant, anxious to see what choices you will make, jealous that

you get to make them & no one else seems to be able to. Go out and create!

P.S.-Those warping robots, btw, however threatening they seem, are sterile & harmless. They only pretend to be vicious. Do your thing and don't worry about them.

If I were as stupid as myself I would slap my own face

(written for the Rhodes College newspaper)

copulo, ergo sum people know that I've been waiting for this day for so long, the day when i, as a columnist for the weekly Rhodes College Sou'wester, get to write down the precious memories that i have accumulated & divest myself of the gems of wisdom i have gleaned ever since i arrived at rhodes almost four years ago & try to disprove death; death will disprove you can't do that on television is my favorite show that was ever on Nickelodeon used to have a show called pete & pete townsend is a pedophile & the front man for a band called the who was more influential in creating the christian church: jesus christ or paul newman in cool hand luke Wilson in the royal tenenbaums & rushmore mountain of rhodes college professors: ivory, kaltner, haynes, walsh should become an armadillo so she could walk on the tips of the claws on her front feet & also have armor might itself not be a good teaching aide, but it might equate to power & protection & who needs good teaching mrs. tingle starring helen mirren & katie holmes is my old roommate joey's middle name that tunica is a city in mississippi where people from Memphis & points beyond go to gam-Bill lewis works in the mailroom & might be the second coming on my Face/Off is John Woo's best movie of the year, 1973, according to the Oscars: the Sting is a singer who acts in Dune, Lock Stock & Two Smoking Barrels of horse minority report stars tom cruise who dates Penelope cruz missilettes are the things that you read & sing from at Church's Chic-ken I please date your sister hazelrigdon corleone is the godfather problem with telling some people a good joke is that it always reminds them of a bad joke like ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country fried steak anDale earnhard(t) on crime suck-sess is the sole earthly judge of right or wrong like Fred Sanford when the big one comes find the meaning of life is there is none the richer, sixpencisyphus vs. thematic links of sausage of innocencisyphus vs. theman with one armadildo bagginsburgerking Montezuma was an Aztec, Inca, Maya Rudolph the rednosed reindeer John

McEnron ballpark franksinatraphysical love can be a beautiful thing except for when it's sodomia farrow is hot in all her movies, but especially Rosemary's Baby skippety bee-bop-a-christopher-reeve, sonny bono skis horses & hittin some treason is the only appeal when oppressed by the will of an entire people magazine staff has only chosen one person as sexiest man alive, twice — that man: Brad Pittsburglar is the city where Agent Wyndham Earle wounded agent Dale Cooper St. houses Black lodge video brother where art thou long until wars are contested on a football field or a basketball court or a baseball field of dreams interpretations phallex trebek goes around the jeopardy studio wearing a button that says PAT SAJAK LOOKS LIKE A BADGER he & sajak play racquetball every Thursday night, before star trekkies are a lot like Christians, always going to conventions on Sundays and asking questions about what happened during episode 32b of season 4, chapter 16, verse 12, when the commander said whatever, like it matters, like the television show wasn't a fictional creation designed to help nerds pass the time, assuage some existential angst & answer a few questions between commercial breaks are important if you want to drive a car & not die hard bruce what you talkin' bout willis stevens poetasterisky business tom cruise we meet again & I still hate youthanasia is the world's most populous continental breakfast times at Ridgemont High on life is like a penis, but most people don't know it, but most people suck, so they usually blow it's a beautiful day in the neighborhood, a beautiful day, don't let it get away, you're on the run & you can't deny reality I tried once.

In copulo, ergo summation: sometimes the best things happen when you aren't even trying to make them happen, like when a hot girl or a hot guy or a hot hermaphrodite or a hot androgyne you're checking out (but who won't give you the time of day) suddenly trips & falls on his/her/hiser/its face.

Also imitation is suicide, both of which are better than sleeping next to a drunken Christian, or a sober cannibal.

Incontinent Man

(Upon reading the following story, the author's friend William Henry noted: "I'm a little confused by this story, but I don't think it sucked as bad as you told me it did.)

"Keep in mind that I may not be the smartest person in the world. My opinion is only as valid as the reasoning behind it. So nothing I say is necessarily correct. You kids are alive at an interesting time in human history — where the abundance of history meets with the daunting challenge of creating something both necessary for our species' continuance which will then necessarily be something the world has never seen before -- our topic for today's lecture is novelty itself as contained in *The Hapless Misadventures of Delbert Jeets*.

"What I think is that Delbert Jeets is a hopeless romantic. He must be. There can be no other reason for his complete preoccupation with maintaining his relationship to Marla. This in spite of the fact that he usually treats her like something the Siamese dragged in."

This all from Professor Pritchard Ford.

Teaching freshman literature at the University...at the end of the 20th century. Today's his fiftieth birthday.

Motorcycle helmet on the desk in the front of the room. Alongside a black backpack.

For some of the stoned kids in the back of the class, Ford is the amorphous body & voice somehow connected to a huge, bushy white goatee.

No one talked once class was underway. No one, that is, except Professor Ford. The book that everyone was supposed to have read for the Monday in question was a recent novel by Matthew Kegalman. Whether or not Ford's students had undertaken the task of reading the work or not was of little concern to Ford—They didn't want to be there—he didn't want to be there—he would lecture anyway—they would listen or not—everyone would get to put the class on their resume—all that good stuff—& it's only an hour—how long could an hour be?

Ford spoke of point-of-view because terms like 'point-of-view,' 'exposition,' & 'character' were written into his contract

with the department—he had to talk about them: “The omniscient point-of-view conveys the sense of importance of not only the actions, but the thoughts of the most important characters, Delbert & Marla. We know exactly what is going on in both of their lives, & the uncertainty of the more familiar first person point-of-view is bypassed.”

Empty stares from the front row met with Ford’s own empty stare. Lecture given; notes taken; all with a blasé demi-malaise. Ford thought of Sartre’s *No Exit* & wondered if Hell shouldn’t have been a Freshman Lit class.

Character analysis: “Clearly the story is autobiographical in some sense, as critic Jon Kreese writes. The author has projected many of his personal characteristics, attributes—even real life events into the fictional world of Delbert Jeets. His obsession with all things related to romance, however, is something that could not be possible for someone outside of a novel to act upon. By nature, Delbert may be a nasty, brutish man, but his transformation, over the course of the narrative, is a powerful example of the endurance of the human spirit.”

Ford gasped for air. The sensation of drippy, brown diarrhea leaving his mouth was palpable. He thought of how he might-could tell his freshman class that this was all bullshit. That the novel was crap. That no novel taught at Sulzman College would be any better.

They wouldn’t know what he was talking about, he decided. & even if they did, it wasn’t his job to disabuse them of their innocence & naivete. That job is for the...

Now for a passage from the novel: “Kegalman writes—and this is primitive Delbert, from the early part of the novel:

‘Slipping into the long pink lingerie she had just bought at the local department store, Marla glowed at her sight in the bedroom mirror. Had she always looked this good? Did it take her fifty years to realize she was sexy? But most important—would Delbert even notice?

As she ripped off the tag (\$79.95), she covered up her child-like smile, gaily embarrassed at the whimsical nature of her mid-afternoon lark at Victoria’s Secret. The look on the face of the co-ed who had sold her the piece was priceless: What could a woman THAT old want with something so...seductive? Would

her breasts even...fit?

Marla cared for her husband; deeply; he was her life; even if she wasn't his. If she didn't want to lose him for good, Marla felt she needed to spice things up a bit. After all, it had been more than six months since they had last had relations; & Marla needed to feel loved, or at least liked enough for her husband to make love to her.

Just as she threw the tag into the wastebasket, Marla heard the garage-door close, & she positioned herself on the bed, trying to find the most erotic pose—one that would make her husband jump into bed & remind her of why she loved him & stayed by his side through all the bullshit he put her through.

But she had forgotten how to be sexy—those abilities had atrophied as the monotony of monogamy sent their sex life into disuse & disrepair. It was absurd to think this, but Marla thought a single piece of lingerie—& maybe a nice pose on the bed—would end months of sexlessness, years of cold, feigned love.

With her husband's footsteps nearing the bedroom, Marla laid on her side using her bended knee to prop up her arm (She had seen a Playboy once & remembered the pose—subtle, she thought, but sturdy, a standard sexual position). Delbert always came to the bedroom as soon as he got home from the University, to get out of his suit & into something more comfortable. He would come in the room, they would make love, everything would be perfect.

Delbert Jeets walked across the bedroom's threshold, giving no verbal recognition to his quondam lover. He emptied his pockets onto his dresser & took off his shoes. Only when Marla made some inadvertent-but noise with the bed's covers did Delbert turn to see her. They locked eyes for the first time in a week. Delbert spoke sans inflection: "What are you dolled up for?"

Marla sat up a bit, like Thora Birch on the crazy guy's bed in *American Beauty*. "I thought I'd surprise you," she said. "Break out of the routine & all. I thought we could have fun tonight. Maybe play some backgammon; drink some wine; you know." She rose her eyebrows up & down real fast & exaggerated, like it was the fifties, like sex had just been invented, like her & Delbert had done when they had just started dating—to say: "let's have sex" without saying it.

Delbert took off his tie & disappeared into his closet. From off camera, Delbert said: “Marla, if you mean what I think you mean, I’d have to say I’m not in the mood for it right now. I had an aggravating day at school today, & I’d really just like to sit down, have a Scotch, relax for a while. You understand.”

“Okay. Yes.”

He thought of saying something else, something nice. Delbert could still conceive of saying something nice to Marla, but he decided against it.

Marla spoke with tears: “That’s perfectly fine, dear. It’s just that I bought this lingerie, & I thought, well—Do you have a headache? I can get you some acetaminophen.”

Back in the Lecture Hall, Professor Ford was in a dilemma: reading passages from the novel under review was the easiest way to pass the time, meaning he could read it & didn’t have to think of something original to say. But he couldn’t stand to read any more of it. Shocking the class, he opened the floor to discussion.

Initially, this proved an empty gesture. Ford’s students were as interested in thinking & talking as Ford himself.

Outside it was snowing—the first snowstorm of the year. Those who were proximate to the windows—& those who weren’t—stared out at the blustery storm scene.

One student, however, did raise her hand. When the professor called on the young woman in the back of the class, her words were barely audible above the hum of the central heating.

“Excuse me,” Ford said. “I didn’t understand a word you said. You’ll have to repeat yourself.”

Upon realizing that the only girl with something to say wasn’t about to repeat her statement, a white kid in Fubu apparel yelled “Beeyatch” at the top of his lungs. To the delight of most, Ford cracked a smile.

That, apparently, was the end of class discussion right there. Looking up at the clock, Pritchard Ford saw that there were still forty-five minutes left; he said: “Did anyone notice Delbert’s penchant for the antique? He has that old typewriter, his collection of Portuguese plates, & the...uh...hieroglyphics. I

think Delbert gets a great sense of security & reliability from antiquity & only when he can finally relinquish—”

The lights suddenly went out in the building. Something about the snow weighing down the electrical wiring outside. “Don’t worry folks, stay in your seats, we can still have class. I see fine, everyone else—can you see?” Ford asked, realizing this could be his opportunity to end class early.

Everyone could see fine, but they squinted, pretending they couldn’t. Ford was about to let everyone go when:

“Excuse me, sir. I disagree.” It was that feeble female voice from the back. Suddenly less feeble.

“Um. Okay,” Professor said. “Go ahead with your point.” He grimaced.

She was birdlike & tall, with cropped hair—Olive Oylsh. “I think your opinions on the nature of the character & the relevance of the book in general are completely off-base.” Before Ford could respond, the girl had run down the steps to the front of the classroom.

Flummoxed, Ford decided to sit down in an empty seat in the front row of desks: “The floor is yours, young lady. Your enthusiasm is...well...go on.”

“I agree that the book is probably autobiographical. I write sometimes, & no matter how hard I try to hide it—what else can I write about except for myself? So then Matthew Kegalman (author) & Delbert Jeets (protagonist) are one in the same...Okay. Fine. The thing is...they are both pathetic, stupid, pitiful human detritus. Why are we studying this crap? Delbert’s epiphany lacks verisimilitude...he’s an asshole for 365 pages & then for 40 pages he’s a genius? What the fuck!?”

Ford squirmed. Noticed that he had butterflies in his stomach. The girl rips out a chunk of her book—the last forty pages.

“This character is incapable of change, & it’s only through the boldly puerile artifice of the author that this contrived ending can spawntaneously generate. Delbert Jeets is what Aristotle called an incontinent man because he knows what he should do, but he still does the opposite. He should be loathed, not pitied—for he has the knowledge, but not the fortitude to do anything

besides follow the path of least resistance. Delbert is an inert planet of guilt & failure, hurtling through the universe with no sign of intelligent design.”

The lights came back on in the classroom. Ford stood up: “There we are. I suspected they would come on soon enough. You can sit down, now, young lady. Thank you for...the Aristotle bit was interesting...I should re-read that...in the future, please provide more textual evidence, so that the rest of the class will be able to follow what you’re—f”

“How about the Irish setter, Delbert’s dog?”

Ford erupts: “His dog is named ‘Heidegger,’ after the philosopher.”

“Yes,” girl said, “Heidegger is so old & neutered & emasculated that he forgets his passions & is reserved to the point where he stays on his little carpet in the den all day long, basking in his sleep. Although the dog is as depressing as the man, at least the dog is content. At least the dog wags his tail when Marla enters the door. If Delbert could just wag his tail, he’d be a better human, but he can’t—he’s no better than a dog.”

“Then,” she continues, “there’s the affair on page 251: ‘For him, it was merely sexual. His wife didn’t need to know about it because it had nothing to do with her. The experience had little meaning for Delbert & it was something he had been compelled to do. Marla was just his wife.’ Just his wife? Come on Professor, I could understand if this were ironic—then it would make sense—but it’s like we’re supposed to support Delbert when he’s a total asshole.”

Professor Ford: “Well, the epiphany—”

Girl: “Epiphany? That’s pure bullshit. Deus ex machina.”

All of a sudden, the rest of the class was on the edge of their collective seat—kind of—hoping that their girl would have something on the man in charge, hoping that the wretched bore of an old man would be proven wrong just once & would be forced to crawl into a dug-out hole-cave, like Saddam Hussein or Osama bin Laden, forever tormented by his wrongness, his intellectual impotence.

Underneath his blushing visage, Ford recalled the day when he presented his Thesis. I’m a Doctor, he thought. This girl

has nothing on me. No, wait. That's not the humble thing. She's just a kid. She's got enthusiasm. But I'm the one who's studied literature for thirty fucking years. I'm the one who's published dozens of essays on fiction & poetry. I'm the authority. I could be wrong, but I'm not. Shit.

"Class dismissed. New book for Thursday. Check your syllabus." Ford left before the students; ran to his motorcycle. His mind raced with ideas for a novel; he had to get home before he lost them.

"Honey I'm home," Pritchard called, but to no avail. He decided not to eat at that exact moment, feeling the creative juices flow to his brain & wanting not to lose those juices.

Instead of eating, he rolled himself a small, thin joint.

Out of whimsical fancy or because of some preternatural urging, Ford decided to keep his eyes closed for the rest of the night. He laughed at his decision, thinking of how capricious the human mind is, how there sometimes seems to be an unending supply of wonder, curiosity, desire to experiment.

Slowly, Ford made his way to his office, to the desk with his typewriter. Every time he stumbled in the darkness of his eidetic peripatos, Ford laughed like one of his college freshman, stoned on a Friday night.

"I'm different from them," he said to himself, "because when I smoke pot, I'm creative." He laughed still. "As if I've ever created anything worth two shits."

Stacks of books lined the hallway leading to his office—Bronte, Celine, Eliot, Melville, another Bronte, Nietzsche, Proust, Joyce, Borges—along with several failed manuscripts of his own devising. Titles that no one's heard like: *The Trivial Pursuit of Truth*, *The Eclectic Epileptic*, and *Bisexual Jesus*.

The typewriter should be ready to go, he thought to himself. "I left a blank piece of paper."

Ford sat down in his wooden rolling chair, eyes still closed, moving rapidly as they observed imaginary Ford-worlds. He had found that with his eyes closed, his subconscious cut itself free from the bullshit of the real world. His imagination would play an endless film for him to watch & record. The longer his eyes stayed closed, the clearer the film would appear.

When he was younger, he thought of writing as the easiest thing in the world. This, before writing a word. His imagination had always been powerful, but as he grew older he became increasingly aware of a pothole on the road from imagination to the printed representation thereof.

Ford tilted his head towards the ceiling, the back of his eyelids looking orange in the center & green on the edges; he placed his fingers on the keyboard. He took one last breath & then it started.

Flow, by Mihaly Csikmen...Ford had read the book the week before & maybe that was why he was 'flowing' so well. Plot, characters, conflict, setting—argh, setting—everything that he had always stumbled on before were now falling into place. It was going to be the greatest romance novel ever—& literary!

Ford typed & typed & didn't feel a thing. He kept his eyes closed and his head tilted up. He pushed the 'return' key—& all the keys—as if it were second nature. He felt like Beethoven, so in touch with the instrument of his genius that it became an extension of his body.

After a minute, the thought crossed Ford's mind that the page was about to end. But he kept typing, kept pounding out the masterpiece. What are pages to a genius? Before long he forgot about lines & pages & sentences altogether; he just kept typing. Like that for hours.

When the sun rose hours later, his eyelids brightened correspondingly; Ford realized he was no longer stoned. What to do. He wasn't finished but the novel was off to a brilliant start.

Feeling satisfaction greater than at any time in recent history, Ford prepared to open his eyes.

"Holy shit!" he said, softly. "Holy shit!" A little louder. "YOU FUCKING IDIOT! NO MORE POT...EVER!!!"

Ford harkened back to the beginning of his writing session, to when that annoying thought about putting in a new piece of paper crossed his mind & left as quick as it came. A distraction from his work that was all it was.

"All of that for one page. & I bet I won't remember any of the rest of it. What the fuck? What the fuck? Ford, you don't deserve greatness if you're just a stupid stoner."

I've got to open my eyes, he thought. As he opened them, he exclaimed: "Marla! You won't believe this!"

& then—a miracle bigger than the 1980 U.S. Olympic hockey team, a miracle bigger than any of Jesus's, bigger than Mother Teresa, bigger than when Julia Roberts dated Lyle Lovett—it was all there. Everything he had worked on through the night. It was there on the screen—41 pages single-spaced in a Microsoft Word file on a brand new flat screen computer monitor.

"Marla!" Ford laughed. Ford cried. The keyboard was specially designed to look & feel like his old typewriter—the old Creelman Blickensderfer.

Ford looked to the doorway, expecting his wife to walk through at any moment. Instead he caught a glimpse of his bedroom, right down the hall, empty. The bed was stripped of its knitted sheets. His wife's dresser drawers were open and empty.

Sobering up, Ford remembered that there was some combination of buttons that he could push to save all the data onto the computer. He did this & noticed...at the bottom of the document...something he hadn't written...Marla.

Dear Pritchard,

You always said that being post-modern was all about blending the past and the future. So what better way to do that than typing on a computer? Right? Control + S will save your work. I bought some disks for you as well.

Consider it a parting gift. If you haven't figured it out yet, I'm leaving you. I've left you, rather. It's over. I'm gone. Pretty far away, too. I don't want to talk to you again, at least not for a long while.

I look forward to one day seeing a novel of yours someday on a bestseller's list. Thanks for the last 15 years. They were good. I will always remember them & I will always love you.

Divorce papers on the coffee table in the living room. Let's not make this difficult. We're both busy people & neither of us can afford a big distraction. Plus, I don't want anything, except for the dog, & I already took the dog. You hated the dog anyway.

Love,

Marla

*P.S.- I wanted to see you one last time but also I didn't want to.
Bye love.*

*P.P.S.- I know it's your birthday. There's an ice cream cake in
the freezer.*

Pritchard cried himself to sleep that morning. He slept on Marla's side of the bed. Didn't bother with sheets or pillow.

**She Broke My Heart & Would Have Eaten It,
Were She Not A Paleskinned Vegan Hipsterchick**

She hated me for not
Being vegetarian.

I love meat.

She had made all her plans;
Saving the world & all

Good stuff.

But it seemed Pam* forgot
That human beings are

Carnivores.

Cows & Whales.

Ignorant of the saving.

SAVE ME, & if you have time

SAVE YOURSELF.

Screw the rain forests if
You hate the way I love you.

Get a life.

Shit, piss, bitch, fuck, fuck, fuck.

Save the whales---Don't eat meat.

Calm down Pam, have some spam.

Save a cow.

Eat Pam.

*That chicksecretary on the American version of *The Office*,
featuring B.J. Novak.

Scooter Girl

Close-up of an EYE.

Pull back to reveal that this eye is the eye of HILARY - a coed dressed in something translucent that renders her thong visible.

Hilary sits in the center of the room; she is the center of attention, particularly for the coterie of boys sitting immediately behind her.

Hilary daydreams with her eyes (un)focused on the area just above her professor's flapping head. Most of the rest of the class have their heads down on their desks, snoring.

Hilary is too depressed to sleep.

MRS. BARDIE - pedantic female teacher with a penchant for mannish suits.

MRS. BARDIE (o.s.)
Miss Bluff! Hilary!

Hilary snaps out of her dream with a shudder.

HILARY
Three times the square root of two, over two.

The non-sleeping person in the front row laughs.

MRS. BARDIE
(appalled)
This is Postmodern Literature, Miss Bluff.
Have you done your homework?

Hilary shakes her head. The two boys sitting directly behind her stir from sleep.

LUKAS - a shy boy, less attractive than Brad Pitt; more attractive than Paul Giamati. Lukas dresses half-preppy, half-punker. Untucked collared shirt, baggy jeans, chain-wallet.

JEFF - more outgoing than Lukas; also more of a preppy; overconfident.

Lukas lifts his sleeping head from the desk; wipes the eye-crusties from his eyes. He stares at Hilary briefly & then pokes his sleeping buddy on the arm.

Lukas
(smiling)
Jeff...hey...Who's the hobag?

Jeff awakes, but is still sleepy. His eyes never fully open.

Jeff
I don't know, Lukas, but I can see her thong.

Hilary leans forward, making her thong more apparent.

Lukas shakes his head; stifles a chuckle. Jeff reaches into Hilary's purse while Lukas continues staring at her.

Lukas
I feel like she's sexually harassing me...

Jeff rifles through Hilary's wallet, finding her student ID, which he hands to Lukas.

INSERT: HILARY'S STUDENT ID.

JEFF
You should hit that.

LUKAS
What? No! Out of my league.

JEFF
Dude. Do you have a penis?

Lukas thinks about the question; hands the ID back to Jeff, who looks at it again. Camera stays on Jeff.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Just ask her out.

LUKAS
Great. Now I'm all nervous. I hate you!

Jeff turns to Lukas, looking hurt.

PAN to Lukas who is speaking to his crotch.

LUKAS (CONT'D)
(to crotch)
All right! I'll do it!

Jeff puts Hilary's wallet back into her purse. She senses his presence & reaches for her purse; turns back & with a suggestive stare, sizes up both Lukas & Jeff.

ZOOM INTO HILARY'S EYE.

Take a deep breath now.

ZOOM OUT OF HILARY'S EYE. WE'RE OUTSIDE OF THE CLASSROOM NOW, IN THE QUAD.

Hilary pushes through the breeze on her mini scooter, oblivious & disappointed with the world. Lukas, out of breath, catches up & runs alongside the trollop.

LUKAS
Hilary?

Hilary keeps riding. Lukas does his best impression of a cutesy prime-time teen soap operatic star: smiles, tilts his head, looks like he's had a cutting-edge lobotomy.

LUKAS (CONT'D)
I was wondering - do you have a boyfriend?

Hilary stops; nods; scoots off. Lukas falls down a manhole, or off a cliff or something.

MATCH CUT: LUKAS LANDS HARD ON THE FLOOR OF HIS ROOM

LUKAS
Ugh.

Lukas rises from the floor, dejectedly. Marches to his desk & sits in the chair. He turns the computer on & reaches into the desk drawer.

CLOSE-UP on Lukas's hand, removing a small bottle of KY warming liquid & a roll of toilet paper.

BACK WITH HILARY ON HER SCOOTER

Jeff runs and catches up with her.

JEFF
Hey!

Hilary pays him no mind.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Nice thong.

Hilary nods to say, "Follow me." A look of anticipation spreads across Jeff's face.

PULL BACK ABOUT FIFTY YARDS

We watch from a distance as Jeff trundles after Hilary; his baggy cargo shorts swinging to & fro; his fingers in belt loops, holding his pants up.

INSIDE HILARY'S DORM ROOM

Hilary flips on the stereo & turns on a dime back towards Jeff, kissing him with violence.

LATER

Jeff pulls away. He rips Hilary's shirt off. Hilary glances down for a moment, mildly taken aback at Jeff's gesture. When she looks up, however, she smiles, raises her eyebrows and grabs Jeff by the front of his belt loop.

The two kiss with tongues extended into the open air, as Hilary drags Jeff to bed.

LATER

Jeff attempts to remove Hilary's bra. Hilary pulls away.

Whenever she speaks, it's as though the words are razors rising through her throat.

HILARY

That's enough for today.

Hilary pushes Jeff out of her way; she curls into the fetal position on top of her covers.

HILARY (CONT'D)

I'm sleepy.

LATER

Exit Jeff. Hilary darts out of bed as soon as the door shuts. She unclasps her bra. The camera DOLLIES IN as Hilary parades to a dimly lit corner of her room.

Hilary clutches a velour box on her bedside table, the size of a loaf of bread. It sits next to a worn copy of *The Scarlet Letter* & an equally worn copy of the christian holy book. Her back is covered with scars.

OVER AT JEFF & LUKAS'S ROOM

Jeff walks in, looking down & scratching his head.

JEFF
I finally understand why so many
dudes go gay these d—

Jeff looks up; sees Lukas fumbling with paraphernalia at his desk.

Toilet paper flies; it looks like Lukas is doing his best impression of gymnastic ribbon-whirlers, trying to get it all back in his drawer.

JEFF(CONT'D)
(laughing)
Oh.

LUKAS
God I hate you. You made me spill
warming liquid all over myself.

JEFF
Are you talking to me...or your peen?

The KY warming fluid gets caught at the top of the drawer; when Lukas shuts it, the fluid squirts at his face. Tissues stick to his hand, arm, & face. He grabs his eyes & runs out the door.

LUKAS
Ahh! It's burning!

BACK AT HILARY'S PAD

Hilary stands in the same place we left her. Deliberately, she kneels down on the Catholic kneeling pad; opens the velour box, pulls out a fancy cat-o-nine-tails.

After lighting several candles, Hilary scourges herself.

LATER

The scars on Hilary's back disappear beneath the same shirt she was wearing earlier. The PHONE rings.

HILARY
Hello.

INTERCUT WITH: DR. REICH IN HIS OFFICE

DR. REICH - an older, bearded gentleman. Dressed in trendy no-lace sneakers, khaki pants, tweed jacket. He is the college's mental health therapist. Diploma or two on the wall behind.

DR. REICH
Hilary, it's Will Reich.
You're late for our appointment.

HILARY
Who?

FLASHBACK - DR. REICH'S OFFICE.

Mrs. Bardie opens her suit vest and places one hand on a hip.

MRS. BARDIE
(like an evangelical)
She's just crazy, crazy, crazy!
I swear that girl is so...wait till
you see what she's wearing
(haughty laugh)...
she'll probably try to pick you up.

Dr. Reich titters; then looks off, thinking about Mrs. Bardie's prediction. Mrs. Bardie buttons her vest; lifts her nose.

MRS. BARDIE (CONT'D)
Hmph.

IN THE MEN'S DORM HALLWAY

Jeff & Lukas close their door & walk down the hall. Jeff grins & playfully pushes Lukas into the side wall.

LUKAS
(sheepish)
Shut the fuck up.

JEFF
At least you don't have blue balls.

LUKAS
Is it always gonna be like this?
Am I going to be jerking off when I'm ninety?

JEFF
I'm telling you, we should be gay.

LUKAS
Yeah. Gay guys get mad pussy.

They arrive at a dorm room without a traditional front door. Instead there are those stringy hippie beady things. Plumes of smoke blast out through the beads.

INSIDE MAXIMUS'S DORM ROOM

CLOSE-UP on Jeff, entering. He passes. CLOSE-UP on Lukas. As he enters, a BONG is thrust in Lukas's face.

LUKAS
Uh. Right on.

Lukas passes.

INSIDE MAXIMUS'S ROOM

MAXIMUS - grizzled veteran of the college circuit; fifth- or sixth-year senior. Stoner mystic. He sits on the floor in the lotus position, puffing away at a HOOKAH.

Lukas & Jeff slouch on the couch; Jeff has a blunt in his mouth; Lukas fondles the aforementioned bong.

LUKAS

(exhaling)

Maybe I should just get really,
really fat. I mean, now I'm just a
run-of-the-mill big burly man,
but if I were like Biggie Smalls or
Andre the Giant, then at least I'd be a novelty.

JEFF

That doesn't make any sense.

MAXIMUS

(suavely)

No, but you're on the right track.
Who's the girl?

LUKAS

Uh.

Lukas is too embarrassed to answer; he points to Jeff.

JEFF

Hilary Bluff.

At the mention of this name, Maximus IMMEDIATELY COUGHS
& blows out a mushroom cloud of smoke.

MAXIMUS

(politely)

Could you pass the pipe, please.

An unseen pipe is produced; Maximus sprinkles keef over the
bowl & lights it with bright-eyed fervor.

DR. REICH'S OFFICE

Hilary's scooter leans against the leather couch. Hilary sits up
straight, looking somewhat uncomfortable, in the couch. Dr.
Reich sits in his chair, his nose buried in an manila case folder.

DR. REICH

Your math teacher seems to think you need help.

Hilary blinks. Tastes something bitter and pinches her face.

HILARY

I'm not even taking math.

DR. REICH

(smiling)

Just...

Hilary relaxes now, speaks confidently.

HILARY

No, I've actually been meaning to
come in for a while.

DR. REICH

Yeah.

HILARY

(cheery)

I read your book.

DR. REICH

Really? What'd you think?

HILARY

I loved it. A lot.

DR. REICH

What was your favorite part?

HILARY

I see you on campus
all the time...with your motorcycle.

Hilary fingers a strand of hair. Dr. Reich smiles.

DR. REICH

I see you with that...
scooter all the time.

Hilary pats her scooter. Dr. Reich shuts the manila folder.

HILARY
Yeah.

Dr. Reich moves to the couch. Hilary crosses her legs, towards the doctor. She takes her hand out of her hair, drapes it on the back of the couch.

HILARY (CONT'D)
(leaning in)
So what did that crazy bitch
tell you about me?

DR. REICH
(leaning in)
She thinks you're a whore, basically, which...

Dr. Reich briefly surveys Hilary's scant attire. Hilary bolts upright; appalled by the accusation.

HILARY
Unbelievable! I'm a virgin!

Dr. Reich laughs; then, realizing she's serious about being a virgin, coughs & leans back; looks serious.

BACK IN MAXIMUS'S ROOM, IN THE MIDDLE OF A
CONVERSATION

MAXIMUS
& we all think, maybe, we'll
be the one she finally fucks...

JEFF
But no.

Passing a joint this whole time.

MAXIMUS
Alas, the girl doesn't fuck.

LUKAS
What?

JEFF
That's what I've been trying to tell you.

LUKAS
I thought, maybe you just
have to wait till the second visit.

Maximus & Jeff shake their heads in unison. Simultaneously, all three shrug & take a hit off whatever paraphernalia is in front of them.

MAXIMUS
(holding in smoke)
Yeah, so forget about her, Lukas.
There are plenty of hot girls out there who'll...

Maximus exhales weed smoke.

MAXIMUS (CONT'D)
...fuck you.

LUKAS
All right, so what should I do?

Maximus closes his eyes & holds up his index finger to say, "Hold on one second."

MAXIMUS
Cornrows.

DR. REICH'S OFFICE

Hilary is all over the doctor, writhing on top of him. Their clothes are on. Suddenly she pulls away. The doctor is concerned.

HILARY
That's enough for now.

LATER

Hilary opens the door; drags her scooter behind her.

DR. REICH
Hilary, you won't tell anyone
about this will you?

Hilary fake-smiles & scoots off. Dr. Reich stands, holding the door, half-bent over in agony. He scratches his head.

OVER IN THE FRESHMAN DORMITORY

The front door to the room is wide open. Two RANDOM MALES are inside playing Nintendo. Hilary glides in on her scooter.

HILARY
Sorry I'm late.

Random Male #1 turns to Random Male #2 & the two of them speak without words. Random Male #2 nods hello to Hilary as he passes her on the way out the door.

Random Male #1 shuts the door with a smile.

FIVE MINUTES LATER

Hilary buttons up her shirt; clutches Random Male #1's alarm clock to ascertain the time.

RANDOM MALE #1
Are you kidding me?

HILARY
Huh?

RANDOM MALE #1
But that was shorter than last time!

HILARY
I'm late.

RANDOM MALE #1
I thought, when you said,
"that's enough for today,"
--last time—
that might have meant, maybe,
this time would be, you know, longer.

Hilary lifts her scooter off the ground; kisses the air in front of her once, so as to say, "Goodbye."

OUTSIDE THE RANDOM MALE DORM

Hilary scoots out the door. Random Male #2 has been sitting on the ground reading a men's magazine. Hilary observes him.

A RANDOM SORORITY GIRL approaches, swinging her purse like she's surrounded by a horde of gnats & must kill them with haste.

Random Male #1, standing at the door, reacts unfavorably at the sorority girl's arrival; he rolls his eyes.

RANDOM MALE #1
Oh shit.

Random Male #2, on his way back inside the dorm room, sees the sorority girl & lets her pass first. As he attempts to follow, the sorority girl shuts the door in his face. Not before scowling at Hilary.

Random Male #2, dejected at his denied entry, stares at Hilary's breasts. Hilary looks him up & down and then slams his body into the door of the dorm. They make out; she moves his hand to her ass.

SORORITY GIRL (o.s.)
Why do you have to fuck that skank?
I thought we had something.
RANDOM MALE #1 (o.s.)
I didn't fuck her.

She doesn't DO that.
That's what you're f--

HILARY SCOOTS ACROSS CAMPUS

SHE ARRIVES AT A DIFFERENT MEN'S DORM

Hilary scoots down the hall & encounters a group of playful, mostly shirtless men, engaged in a game of nerf football. RANDOM MALE #3 separates himself from the group; leans against the wall, talking to Hilary.

RANDOM MALE #3
I didn't know if I'd see you today.

Hilary brushes hair out of her face; looks down to the ground & follows Random Male #3 into his room.

THE HILARY-IS-PRESUMABLY-HORNY-MONTAGE

- Hilary with Random Male #3: Ends with Random Male banging his head against the wall, muttering to himself.
- Hilary scoots across the hall to another dorm room. Grabs one of the football players (Random Male #4)
- Hilary with Random Male #4: Ends with Random Male #4 reclining in a chair; a clear bag of ice on his crotch.
- Hilary scoots across the hall, grabs Random Male #5.
- Hilary with Random Male #5: Ends with Random Male #5 punching a heavy bag; a thin, nerdy guy.
- Hilary scoots.
- Hilary with Random Male #6: When Hilary exits; the camera PANS with Random Male #6, as he steps up on a chair; a noose dangling from the rafters above.
- Hilary scoots into one last room.

INSIDE THE ROOM OF RANDOM MALE #7

Random Male #7 lies on his back with his head against the headboard of the bed, moaning softly & twitching with pleasure. We see the back of Hilary's head bobbing up & down.

Hilary pulls away from Random Male #7.

Random Male #7 reacts first by smiling like he's in on the joke. Then, seeing Hilary start to dress, he panics.

RANDOM MALE #7
Wh-wh-what?

HILARY
You've had enough.

RANDOM MALE #7
I think you'll know when I've had enough.

HILARY
Hmf.

RANDOM MALE #7
There's a pretty clear ending
to this...particular event that we were,
I thought about to finish – don't
we have to finish what we started?

Hilary kisses the air in front of her face & turns to the door.

Random Male #7 leaps from bed & bounds after Hilary. She turns & he slaps her. Hilary waits a moment before thrusting her knee into Random Male #7's crotch.

HALLWAY

Hilary scoots out faster than before.

A FIRM, IMMOVABLE BODY SIDLES DOWN THE HALL

Hilary scoots right into the immovable body & is knocked to the ground, unconscious.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL LUKAS, WITH FRESH CORNROWS

Lukas leans over Hilary, who lies in the fetal position.

Lukas kneels down at Hilary's side; he pulls one of her eyelids open & it shuts immediately. Lukas looks up. None of the football playing doofs notice what's happened.

With funereal solemnity, Lukas lifts Hilary's lithe, but crumpled mass & walks with her cradled in his arms, down the hall...Past the football game...in super slow motion.

INSIDE MAXIMUS'S ROOM

Maximus lies napping on a bean-bag chair, on the floor. Lukas's foot enters through the drapes, as he tries to kick his way through. He enters with Hilary. Drops her on the couch, without solemnity. This wakes Maximus.

MAXIMUS

Holy shit.

LUKAS

Um. She like, ran into me.

Maximus is harried.

MAXIMUS

All right, all right, all right...

Hilary rolls over slightly. Lukas and Maximus exchange glances. Maximus sighs, relieved.

MAXIMUS (CONT'D)

I'm gonna run to the...quick mart...
& get something for her.

LUKAS

Um.

MAXIMUS

Watch her till I get back.

Maximus exits.

Lukas cannot decide whether to hate the girl he's saved or not. He smokes his joint & looks back & forth, at her & away into the void. He makes a point of blowing each puff of smoke over Hilary's face.

Lukas gently brushes hair out of Hilary's face. She smiles wanly. Lukas discontinues hair-play.

HILARY

(weakly)

Don't stop.

Lukas's eyes light up. He turns 90 degrees in his crouch. Puts the joint in the ashtray. Devotes two hands to renewed hair-play. This wakes Hilary.

HILARY (CONT'D)

That feels sooooo good.

She looks at Lukas's face, trying to place him.

HILARY (CONT'D)

Nice corn rows.

Lukas can't help but smile. Hilary grabs his face & pulls it towards hers, at the same time extending her tongue. Lukas pulls away.

LUKAS

Whoa.

Hilary closes her eyes.

HILARY

(sweetly stoned)

Can you take me to the bed?

Lukas lifts her.

HILARY (CONT'D)
(drunkishly)
I feel so weird.
You're really cute, you know.

Lukas drops her on the bed. Hilary quickly takes off her clothes & lies on her stomach. She points to her shoulders.

HILARY (CONT'D)
(girlish)
Massage, massage, massage.
I'm so fucking tense you can't believe.

Lukas climbs on top of Hilary; pauses momentarily, as his hands touch the scars on her back. He then massages her, looking rather disinterested in the affair.

Hilary's breathing increases in heaviness as Lukas massages. This brings cheer to Lukas, who intensifies the massage.

LATER

Hilary turns over. She wraps her arms around Lukas's neck & pulls herself up to him.

HILARY (CONT'D)
Love me.

Hilary licks at Lukas's mouth. He pulls away.

LUKAS
Hey, hold on.

Hilary falls back.

LUKAS (CONT'D)
Why'd you tell me you have a boyfriend?

HILARY
I do.

Enter Maximus. Hilary & Lukas turn to him.

HILARY
That's him.

MAXIMUS
What the fuck, man?

OUTSIDE IN THE HALL

Maximus hurls Lukas through the stringy beads. Lukas falls. Maximus pounces on Lukas like a hawk. Lots of grunting.

OUTSIDE AT ANOTHER DOOR

Maximus pushes Lukas into the door, opening it. Again, Maximus leaps at Lukas. They scuffle for a moment, before Maximus hurls Lukas through the exterior door.

OUTSIDE THE DORM ROOM, AT THE WINDOW

Hilary climbs, half-naked, & like a rabid zombie, out of the dorm window.

HILARY
(muttering)
No one loves me.
Why doesn't anyone love me?

She drops down & lands like a cat on the grass. After a moment, Hilary pounces off down the sidewalk in her underwear.

OVER ON THE ROAD

A truck is driving slowly down the road. Hilary runs straight at the moving vehicle, whose driver slows for her. She pounces on the hood of the truck, on all fours.

HILARY
(louder)
Why doesn't anyone love me?

She bangs the hood before climbing onto the top of the truck's cab.

The DRIVER reacts by sticking his head out his window & craning it upward.

DRIVER
What the fuck are you doing?

Hilary squirms over so that her head is only inches above the driver's. She smiles & kisses him once on the forehead.

HILARY
Will you love me?

ON THE ROAD WITH THE TRUCK

Hilary rips open the door & yanks the driver out. She climbs on top of him & ferociously dry-humps him. The driver's female companion reacts unfavorably.

THE CAMERA PANS AWAY FROM THE TWO DRY-HUMPERS
UNTIL THEY ARE OFF-SCREEN

All we see now is the truck, slowly drifting off down the street. In his haste, the driver neglected to put it in park.

HILARY (O.S.)
That's enough for today.

Hilary exits the car ass first; runs off down the street.

ALL ALONE WITH HILARY ON THE HANDHELD, RUNNING
DOWN THE STREET IN HER SKIVVIES.

Her hair is wild & her face is haggard with desperation & her eyes are watered-up.

HILARY
No one loves me.

BACK ON THE GROUND NEAR OUTSIDE THE DORM
BUILDING

Maximus & Lukas lay, battered, beaten, & out of breath. Doubled over. Maximus on the right. Lukas on the left. In the distance, between them, Hilary runs down the road.

Maximus lights a cigarette.

MAXIMUS
(‘over’ Hilary now)
Someone should help that girl.

LUKAS
(eager)
I’ll help her!

MAXIMUS
(back in love with her)
Dude! Hands off.

LUKAS
Naw. Hands on.

Lukas scurries off, out of frame, after Hilary.

IN THE DISTANCE

Hilary runs, on the far right side of frame.

Lukas enters from the left & traverses a distance of about thirty yards.

Lukas tackles Hilary to the ground.

Trickster is Meaningless

I am plagued, from time to time, by the irrational intrusion of a hypercritical voice into the otherwise unmitigated monologue of my see-want-try-&-get Ego.

Vague is the voice, yet the anxiety it causes is quite specific, & rather annoying. A querulous, stentorian voice of authority, talking, questioning, repeating its mantras like a Buddhist monk with OCD: "Have you finished yet? Have you? Have you? Have you? Have you?"

Had I lived in a previous century, perhaps before Nietzsche killed God, I may have thought the voice was not my own, but the voice of another, more powerful figure. Alas, the voice of God is as much a possibility as whirring through traffic on my unicorn, according to our modern Dogma.

The voice is mine, or at least "of me" - originating from a normally quiet hamlet of neurons, somewhere on the lower east side of my prefrontal cortex.

Knowing this is what keeps me from asking my own questions of the voice. Like the one I most often think to ask, "Have I finished what?"

Sometimes I wonder if I'm at the beginning of a journey with this voice - that maybe its spasmodic droppings-in are but trailers before the feature presentation: Straitjacket.

Used to have dreams where I'd be lost in massive, elaborate mazes, full of those bouncy pinball, with a Trickster god laughing at my futile explorations of the maze.

That's the tone of voice, the one that comes unannounced & badgers me for half-hours at a time, disturbing the inertia of monolithic Ego.

The Trickster that resembles Jack Nicholson's Joker in Batman. Powder on the face. Chintzy accessories. Condescending smile.

Never could escape from the colorful, TRON-inspired world of mazes that the Trickster laid before me.

Build Her Burger

Early in the morning.

The burger store is an anomaly. It's never that crowded. Or its entirely empty - inside Burger Builder, Jon's putting it altogether in his head. People who run the world? What kind of cockamamie is that?

No one runs the world - it's not possible - no one's running this mess - some may think they rule the world - everyone at some time does, don't they? - when i'm drunk or stoned or high on life, I believe I'm starring in a grand drama & all the other people I see in the world were hired by the maniacal director backstage, the one I never see but who always seems to get his directions inside my head anyway.

This is all beside the point. Those people vanished for saying a word. I'd be suicidal if I said the word. But a coward if I don't; if I can't even whisper it inside my head even.

The deep black bristles of Jon's bushy Irish eyebrows bloom & bulge as his ego inflates with the maniacal impulse: whisper the word because you've always been able to do that which others could not. You are stronger than everyone else, Jon, aren't you? Now show it.

Build-a-burger, build-a-burger, build-a-burger. Fuck you, out there, whomever the fuck you are.

The restaurant is dead peaceful; glow from the sunset's crimson effluence gives The Build-a-Burger franchise a surreal, post-apocalyptic tint. Jon feels like he's the solitary figure in some minor Edward Hopper painting, one that didn't make the book of his collected work at the public library. Silence dulls him, cajoles him into meditation.

Build-a-Burger - he says it again in his head - yet the heart keeps pumping blood through his body - oxygen reaches his head - consciousness persists - I wouldn't mind saying good bye to consciousness altogether maybe - those fucks - I wouldn't miss this pathetic excuse - I want to rule the world - No - I'm a coward.

The sun has set. Someone at the electric plant must have fallen prey to the semantic contagion. Jon stares back at the

stragglers on the sidewalk on the other side of The Build-a-Burger's front window. An Episcopal minister loiters, ripping off strips of duct tape & distributing them.

As Jon emerges from the corridors of his humble interior labyrinth, he is greeted by the expectant eyes of half a dozen quivering adults, dressed in the same clothes they put on when they woke up to go to work in the town - they're more pathetic than I - he realizes and opens his mouth: "Build-a-Burger."

The expectant eyes relax. The suits & skirts step back from the Restaurant; they roam the street like zombies while the man of the cloth runs higgledy-piggledy into the sunset, his tears loosening the grip of the tape covering his mouth, the uncomfortable crying-grimace-wrinkles unhinging the same tape; yet he persists.

On Michel Foucault's What Is The Author?

One fine morning in May a slim young horsewoman might have been seen riding a handsome sorrel mare along the flowery avenues of the Bois de Boulogne.

Who is the author of the following passage?

I wonder.

The first time I read this line, it came from a character, Monsieur Grand, in *The Plague* by Albert Camus.

In all likelihood, however, there are some who first read this line in a lesser-known book by the name of *Reader's Block* by David Markson.

It appears then that I have at least two possible options: Albert Camus or David Markson.

Or perhaps I could say that they are both authors of the same text.

Also tending to forget that character in *The Plague*, Joseph Grand?

Who rewrites the same opening sentence for a novel eternally, with only minimal variations?

David Markson wrote that last bit.

Maybe he is citing *The Plague* & thus Albert Camus; but the citation (if it is one) comes on seven pages BEFORE the question-mark-less mention of "One fine morning..."

Not to add avec exactly 333 interspersed unattributed quotations awaiting annotation?

David Markson authored that last bit as well, this time two pages after the unattributed quotation from *The Plague*.

This is somewhat closer, in terms of page distance, & thus to my mind 'counts' more as an attribution.

However, what of the 332 other unattributed quotations, pages & pages away from this notation?

Moreover, what of those readers who fail to put the pieces together?

Is there anyone besides Markson himself who is well read or well researched enough to catch what is a reference & what is an original idea of the Author David Markson?

Or does the absence of narrative progression plus that cross-circuited schematism possibly render it even a poem of sorts?

Markson has created a work that bounces around back & forth between allusion & declaration, fiction & nonfiction, continuity & discontinuity.

One sentence of Markson's reads, "Boadicea committed suicide with poison."

Another simply: '*Ma in Ispagna son gia mille e tre!*'

All discourses, whatever their status, form, value, & whatever the treatment to which they will be subjected, would then develop in the anonymity of a murmur...we would hear hardly anything but the stirring of an indifference: 'What difference does it make who is speaking?'

What difference does it make that Michel Foucault is the author of those last two sentences?

Author Foucault, in his text *What is the Author?* seems to think that it makes little difference who is speaking, that the attribution of a text to an author, of ideas to an author, is a tool of the dominant culture used to restrict the expansion of language.

The author allows a limitation of the cancerous & dangerous proliferation of significations within a world where one is thrifty not only with one's resources & riches, but also with one's discourses & their significations...the author is...the ideological figure by which one marks the manner in which we fear the proliferation of meaning.

Things make sense.

But what if 'sense' were 'cents' in the cents of dollars & sense?

The world would be aflutter, in chaos.

Take away our present (dominant) significations—or alter them--& at least immediately things would not make cents.

Nonetheless, since the beginning of human discourse, significations have been capricious.

The English language itself can be seen to have changed from Old to Middle to Modern to American (in my case), with subtle digressions & mutations consistently occurring.

The words we use, however, are not nearly as powerful as the political aims our words can accomplish; those in power are kept in power by the words of their time; change those words & that power is threatened.

Imagine a human being who wants to tell a story.

Her story should be interesting if people are going to enjoy it.

Since she most likely wants people to enjoy her story she makes it interesting, or at least tries to do so.

Pile up a number of interesting stories & our storyteller arrives at a point where she has to become more & more creative in order to entertain her audience.

Novelty & creativity are key to the storyteller.

Within a single dominant system of signification, how quickly are stories exhausted?

Modern day storytellers are burdened by the knowledge that 'it's all been done.'

Every story has been told at least a dozen different times.

Storytellers must therefore look outside the dominant system of signification in order to maintain the interest of the reading public.

We are accustomed, as we have seen earlier, to saying that the author is the genial creator of a work in which he deposits, with indefinite wealth & generosity, an inexhaustible world of signification.

We are used to thinking that the author is so different from all other men, & so transcendent with regard to all languages that, as soon as he speaks, meaning begins to proliferate, to proliferate indefinitely.

Human beings who create stories are talented individuals who can see outside the dominant language, who can experiment with that language & in the process of doing so alter the language so that invented metaphor grafts onto the living language.

But what exactly do we admire about the entire process of creating a story with words?

Is it the process itself? Inspiration?

I argue no, for the actual creation is something that is still mysterious to us & for all intents & purposes it is independent of human beings.

Even if the author herself can define inspiration, readers are left in the cold.

Do we admire the person who creates the story?

The answer again is no because we have never met the person who created the story; if we have met the person, we are back to square one, asking ourselves what we could admire given that we don't know what's even happening under the aegis of 'creation.'

What we admire is the actual story, the fictional or nonfictional account given.

It is the text that inspires us, scares us, not the so-&-so who wrote the text.

A text is never the product of a unified consciousness (the author) but consists of several socially determined roles, or 'author-functions.'

Britney Spears is the author of the song 'I'm a slave 4 u.'

Most Americans know who Britney Spears is, & so when the average American listens to 'I'm a slave 4 u' the first time, it is likely that this average American will have an impression in their mind, a preconceived notion of what Britney equals.

She's sexy, perhaps.

She's a teenie-bopper (or was).

She's untalented, some might say.

Whatever.

Our average American listens to the song & as soon as they recognize the song as being attached to Britney Spears, the meaning of the song has been shifted, contorted, amended, to include all that is meant by 'Britney Spears.'

Never will an American who knows of Britney Spears be capable of listening to a song they know to be performed by Britney Spears without this knowledge altering, or in fact, determining their perception of the music.

When one says 'Aristotle,' one employs a word that is the equivalent of one, or a series of, definite descriptions, such as 'the author of the *Analytics*,' 'the founder of ontology,' & so forth.

One cannot stop there, however, because a proper name does not have just one signification.

When one says 'Aristotle,' one dons filtered sunglasses that tint the text when read thru the filtering lenses.

The text of *Nicomachean Ethics* is one thing; the text of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* is another thing entirely.

Has anyone ever read *Nicomachean Ethics*?

Haven't we always read Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*?

For Foucault, the fact that we have always read works by Aristotle, by Shakespeare, by Britney Spears, problematizes the impact that the actual texts of these artists have on readers/listeners.

Since all we know are texts avec author-functions, there is no telling what we are missing in the text sans author-functions.

& since we have the filtered sunglasses on, any discrepancies within the texts of a certain author-function are compressed, minimized, perhaps ignored.

These aspects of an individual which we designate as making him an author are only a projection in more or less psychologizing terms, of the operations that we force texts to undergo, the connections that we make, the traits that we establish as pertinent, the continuities that we recognize, or the exclusions we practice.

Critics of literature, not the creators thereof, are the ones who seek to unify & codify texts.

The creation of the author is an attempt to pigeonhole written works.

This happens after the fact, after the creation of the work, in order to help readers of the work to better attempt understanding the work; the process is analogous to Cliff's notes; i.e. the mention of Shakespeare is enough to turn some people away from reading *Hamlet*; the mention of Britney Spears will evoke twinges & grimaces in some; & if anyone tells me a book is written by John Grisham, I will not be reading it (this having never read a John Grisham novel).

The author also serves to neutralize the contradictions that may emerge in a series of texts: there must be—at a certain

level of her thought or desire, of her consciousness or unconscious—a point where contradictions are resolved, where incompatible elements are at last tied together or organized around a fundamental or originating contradiction.

Shakespeare is the author of a written work if a computer can determine that there are a specified number of invented words per verse of poetry.

If in fact the literal William Shakespeare created a work with little or no invented words, this work would then not be attributed to the ideological projected Shakespeare of the past handful of centuries.

Scientific theories or religious texts could also not be attributed to projected Shakespeare, for projected Shakespeare is a poet & playwright only.

If meaning is left for the interpretations & projections & interpolations of critics, after the fact, why even bother to have an author?

Why does it matter?

We would no longer hear the questions that have been rehashed for so long: “Who really spoke? Is it really he & not someone else? With what authenticity or originality? & what part of his deepest self did he express in his discourse?”

Instead there would be other questions, like these: “What are the modes of existence of this discourse? Where has it been used, how can it circulate, & who can appropriate it for himself?”

Then comes the great indifference, taking the form (in a utopia sans author-functions) of a reader who can no longer tell the difference even between those three super-genres Foucault describes: Literature, Science, & Religion.

Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*:

Pragmatism does not erect Science as an idol to fill the place once held by God.

It views science as one genre of literature or, put the other way around, literature & the arts as inquiries on the same footing as scientific inquiries.

Physics is a way of trying to cope with various bits of the universe; ethics is a matter of trying to cope with other bits.

Mathematics helps physics do its job; literature & the arts help ethics do its.

The question of what propositions to assert, which pictures to look at, what narratives to listen to & comment on & retell, are all questions about what will help us get what we want (or what we *should* want).

Who can appropriate it for himself?

The Man In The White Suit

EXT. ENCHANTED FOREST - DAY

A large, stocky, man with mustache trudges into the Enchanted Forest, entering from the city. He wears only a wifebeater t-shirt, plaid boxer shorts, & a tie, which he removes as he walks on thru the forest.

EXT. ENCHANTED FOREST - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

The man walks through brush, paw-swiping branches out of his way.

MAN'S POV - branches being moved out of the way. A great tree in the distance. It isn't nighttime, but it seems to have gotten darker.

At the base of the tree slumbers GRACE, a young lady tucked inside a glowing sleeping bag.

ANGLE ON the man, nonplussed by Grace.

The man continues thru the forest, passing a SLEEPING CHILD, then ANOTHER, then ANOTHER, each asleep in a glowing sleeping bag.

Coming upon an empty sleeping bag, the man enters with little hesitation.

CLOSE-UP of the man in the white suit: his eyes close; he half-smiles.

Pull back: the entire forest is quiet, asleep.

Fade to black.

EXT. ROAD - SUNRISE

A late-model 4-door car idles on the side of the road; the driver's side door is open.

With his back to the road, a MAN IN A WHITE SUIT pisses into the enchanted forest. He turns around. It is the man from earlier in the t-shirt & boxer shorts.

The man in the white suit approaches the car with trepidation. He circles the car, looking off in all directions for its owner.

MAN'S POV - a hundred yards off, up ahead by the side of the road, stands a young lady with a despondent posture & dark brown hair hiding her face.

It is GRACE. She wears a flower-print dress which reaches to just above her knees; a red sweater draped over her shoulders; bobbi socks; shiny black shoes.

The man in the white suit strides around the car with newfound pep.

INT. CAR - MOMENTS LATER

The car is a mess of loose papers, file folders & compact discs. The man in the white suit puts the car in drive.

As the man in the white suit clears most of the pile away, dumping it into the back seat, he stops the car so that Grace appears thru the passenger window.

The man in the white suit opens the passenger door for Grace; he continues to unload clutter into back seat.

MAN IN WHITE SUIT

Sorry for the mess...I don't know—

The man with the moustache looks up.

MAN'S POV - Grace is gone.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

The man in the white suit walks around the car, looking in all directions. He closes the passenger door, looks around, walks around, gets in the driver's side.

INT. CAR - MOMENTS LATER

The man in the white suit drives along peaceably enough. The road is empty.

He pulls a CD case out from under his ass, opens the case & puts the disc in the CD player.

He gives a few tracks brief play before skipping through them, contemptuously.

He examines the liner notes with a grimace.

MAN'S POV - the liner notes lower out of frame & Grace can be seen ahead, on the side of the road.

Chilling sound effect (to recur).

EXT. ROAD

CLOSE-UP of Grace. Her hair is pulled back. She sucks on a bright red lollipop. Her posture is impeccable.

INT. CAR

Angle on the man in the white suit, nonplussed.

MAN IN WHITE SUIT

What the—no way...

He cranes his neck to watch Grace as he drives on.

MAN'S POV - Grace recedes into the distance.

The man in the white suit turns his attention to the road. He shakes his head back & forth till his cheeks & his jowls jiggle, trying to shake off the willies.

The CD begins to skip so the man in the white suit removes the CD, putting in another.

Grace flash-appears for one frame, pressed against the windshield; her mouth a contorted, harsh-angular rictus.

Angle on the man in the white suit, a brief moment of peace, shaking his head, rocking out. He stops suddenly, double-takes & gazes wide-eyed straight ahead.

MOUSTACHE POV - ahead, about a hundred yards, on the side of the road, Grace again; sucking her lollipop; sticking out her thumb good-naturedly.

Chilling sound effect.

MAN IN WHITE SUIT (CONT'D)
No. I'm not picking you up. I don't care
how many times you magically reappear on
the side of the road.

INSERT - ODOMETER 45-55 mph.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Grace stands impassively as the car whooshes by. The wind ruffles the lace on her Bobbi socks.

INSERT - ODOMETER CLIMBING 50-60 mph.

INT. CAR - SAME

MAN'S POV - the passenger seat is empty but for a man's leather wallet.

The man opens the wallet; scans the ID.

MAN IN WHITE SUIT
I'm Larry Sellers. My name
is Larry Sellers.

INSERT - ODOMETER CLIMBING 55-65 mph.

EXT. ROAD - SAME

Standing directly on top of the double yellow line in the middle of the road is Grace.

She uses the instep of one foot to itch the back of her other leg's shin.

MAN IN WHITE SUIT
Aah!!

CLOSE-UP of foot on brake pedal.

CLOSE-UP on Grace as she turns complacently from profile to head-on. She blows a big bubble with her gum.

The car comes to a stop inches from Grace. She is unfazed & walks calmly to the passenger's door.

CLOSE-UP of foot switching from brake to gas.

The car speeds off.

INT. CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Angle on the man in the white suit.

MAN IN WHITE SUIT

Ha ha!

Angle on Grace in passenger seat.

GRACE

What kind of jerk doesn't pick up a nice
sweet girl, alone on the side of the
road? Just who do you think you are?

The man in the white suit double-takes; hyperventilates.

GRACE (CONT'D)

We've gotten off to a bad start, haven't we?

The man in the white suit eyes Grace suspiciously.

GRACE (CONT'D)

My name's Grace. What's yours?

MAN IN WHITE SUIT

L-Larry. Larry Sellers.

Grace smiles; sucks her lolly.

MAN IN WHITE SUIT (CONT'D)

Are you a good ghost or a bad ghost?

Grace sucks her lolly; extends her hand in the man's direction.

GRACE

Oh, how cute. But I'm real, Larry.
Besides, I mean you no harm. Go on, touch
me. You'll see. I'm as real as you are.

The man focuses on the road; checks his mirrors.

GRACE (CONT'D)

(yelling; red-face)

What's the matter, Larry? Don't you want
to touch me? (beat) Touch me, Larry. Now!

Larry touches Grace's arm, recoiling in horror.

Angle on Grace, now sitting in the backseat, flipping through a
smattering of paperwork.

GRACE (CONT'D)

(reading from paper)

Take me to Solstice Road.

MAN IN WHITE SUIT

Right away, ma'am.

The man tips his invisible cap in Grace's direction. He double-
takes.

MAN IN WHITE SUIT (CONT'D)

Wait a second...Not so fast...

I'm not taking you anywhere
until I know who you are.

The sound of gravel crunching; the car's brakes.

GRACE

We're here.

EXT. CAR - DAY

Grace is halfway out of the car. The man in the white suit follows.
He walks passively behind Grace towards a sign reading "Camp
Solstice".

CLOSE-UP on the TRUST FALLER who takes a deep breath
before closing his eyes & falling backwards with his arms
crossed in front.

Grace & the man in the white suit approach the group of SIX TRUST FALL CATCHERS as the trust faller is falling. His fall is frozen in time, mid-fall.

Grace approaches TRUST FALL CATCHER 1 & turns him around.

For CATCHER 2, Grace lowers his arms to his sides.

GRACE

(to moustache man)

Are you just gonna stand there looking pretty?

Angle on the man in the white suit: he stares off fiercely. Grace moves from trust fall catcher to trust fall catcher, lowering arms, repositioning bodies. Finished, Grace walks off. Behind her—unfrozen in time—the trust faller falls to the ground.

ANGLE ON the man in the white suit, who convulses with involuntary empathy.

INT. CAR - DAY - LATER

Grace sits in the passenger seat, sucking her lolly.

MAN IN WHITE SUIT

Who are you? (beat) I mean, what are you?

GRACE

That's more like it. Now we're getting somewhere. Not that I'm an object—women are not objects, Larry, you remember that.

Grace slaps the man in the white suit...barely.

GRACE (CONT'D)

You don't know what to think of me do you, Larry? I'm the most mysterious woman you've ever met & that scares you.

MAN IN WHITE SUIT

No, ma'am. My mama done spoke in tongues—
she was way crazier than you.

EXT. ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Two CARS have CRASHED. Grace & the man in the white suit approach the red car. The man in the white suit is woozy, has butterflies in his stomach, goosebumps, nausea.

The MALE DRIVER is slumped against the wheel/dashboard of the crashed car. He is angled towards the car door, such that when Grace opens the door, he crumples out, face-planting on the pavement.

The man in the white suit sways in the wind, observing.

Grace removes a handle of vodka from her purse. She begins pouring it over the male driver, starting with his mouth, covering his entire body, the ground, the car.

The man in the white suit straightens up.

MAN IN WHITE SUIT

So you're a prankster-demon. That wasn't
so hard to figure out. I was right all
along. This is some sick supernatural
bullshit. I'm leaving.

Grace continues pouring vodka all over the scene. She watches as the man in the white suit returns to the car.

Grace races to the car.

INT. CAR - MOMENTS LATER

The man with in the white suit snarls while he drives.

GRACE

There's more to it than pranking, Larry.
Besides I want you to be my partner in
crime. Doesn't that make you
feel...special?

MAN IN WHITE SUIT

If it's not too much trouble, I'll just
drop myself off at home & then you can

have the car & go & pull all the
practical jokes you want...
sweetheart...just without me.

Grace leans in, tilts her head to the side condescendingly.

GRACE

Just one more stop, darlin.

EXT. PARK BENCH - DAY

A park bench on a sidewalk. It is sunnier than in previous scenes.

A van, marked "To Catch a Pervert (w/Chris Manson)."

Out of the double-doors of the van comes CHRIS MANSON - 45, clean-cut, well dressed, tan.

Grace & the man in the white suit approach the park bench. The man in the white suit is woozy; stumbles.

MAN'S POV - Grace & Chris Manson laugh. Little mini star-particles & floaties appear, obfuscating the scene.

The man in the white suit sways in the wind, but snaps to attention once Chris Manson firmly grabs his shoulder.

GRACE

Relax, Larry, honey. It'll only be a
minute. Be strong for mama.

The man in the white suit smiles like a drunk.

The faint trace of a cuckoo clock sound effect.

MOUSTACHE POV - in & out of focus as Chris Manson guides Grace by the ass to the park bench.

EXT. PARK BENCH - DAY

Angle on Grace, who sits in the center of the bench with her knees pressed in & her feet spread.

She shifts her legs nervously; she sucks her lolli.

SUPER: "00:00:01 - TIME CODE" + "To Catch a Pervert" +
"Episode 421".

A NORMAL LOOKING GUY approaches. He moves to sit on Grace's left; she mirrors him; then to the right; she mirrors him; finally he sits, hemmed in by Grace.

Angle on Chris Manson, hiding behind a video camera.

CHRIS MANSON
Right on schedule.

The normal looking guy takes a seat; looks at his watch; looks off.

INSERT - BUS STOP SIGN

The normal looking guy elbows Grace out of his personal space, so that he can tap away at his cell phone.
Grace harumphs.

GRACE
I think I see a quarter.

CHRIS MANSON (V.O.)
Where's she going? Where's she going?

Grace stands slowly, leaning into the normal guy on the bench as she stands. She walks to the quarter.

CLOSE-UP of a Maryland quarter.

Angle on Grace, bending over. Over her shoulder on the bench, the normal looking guy taps on his phone.

SMASH CUT TO: EXT. PARK BENCH

CLOSE-UP of the normal looking guy's eyes, shifting from his cell phone to Grace's ass.

SMASH CUT TO:
Chris Manson striding towards the park bench, smug.

CHRIS MANSON
We got him!

EXT. PARK BENCH

Chris Manson & Grace canoodle on the bench.

CHRIS MANSON
You should stick around, baby. We pump
out criminals like sausages on this
show...you could come on full-time. We
could go on the road together.

Grace stands. She turns in all directions.

GRACE
Larry? Larry? Where's my Larry?

EXT. ENCHANTED FOREST

The man in the white suit hacks through branches.

GRACE (V.O.)
You son of a bitch! How dare you leave me
behind with that lunatic.

Grace walks through the same stretch of forest. She is followed
close upon by a SCARY GRACE (dressed like goth/punk) & then
SPORTY GRACE (dressed colorfully).

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

The man in the white suit walks down the street, followed by
Grace, scary Grace, & sporty Grace.
Grace walks ahead. Scary Grace approaches the man in the
white suit; grabs his arm.

SCARY GRACE
(whispering into man's ear)
I like it when boys play hard to get.

Scary Grace walks ahead; catching up with Grace.

SPORTY GRACE
Piggybacks!

Sporty Grace runs up behind the man in the white suit; latches onto his back & they walk on together.

SPORTY GRACE (CONT'D)
(childlike)
You've got to be our partner in crime.
We'd have so much fun.

A look of recognition flashes across the face of an otherwise scowling man in the white suit.

ESTABLISHING SHOT - OFFICE BUILDING

INT. OFFICE SPACE - DAY

The man in the white suit walks past cubicles, carrying sporty Grace on his back. He enters his own cubicle.

INT. CUBICLE - CONTINUOUS

Grace & scary Grace loiter in opposite corners.
Enter THE BOSS, sipping a mug of coffee, his eyeglasses hanging off the edge of his nose.

THE BOSS
Good morning, Larry!

Larry turns; smiles politely.
The boss is nonplussed by Grace; nonplussed by 2nd Grace.
3rd Grace approaches the boss; runs her finger down the length of his tie.

THE BOSS (CONT'D)
You know that there's three little girls...

MAN IN WHITE SUIT
Right but it's really only one crazy
girl, three incarnations.

THE BOSS
Hmm...I see.

Grace, 2nd Grace, & 3rd Grace nod their heads in unison.

MAN IN WHITE SUIT
She's some kind of supernatural Trickster
god, sent to earth to torment humankind
for no apparent reason. If you wanna take
her off my hands, you're more than
welcome. One of her seems to have taken a
shining to you.

2nd Grace & 3rd Grace canoodle with the boss.

THE BOSS
No, thanks. I think I
heard my gchat ding.

The boss extricates himself awkwardly.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The man in the white suit is in his underwear. He walks
purposively across the room, under the covers.
Enter Grace. She sidles up in bed next to the man.

CLOSE-UP on the man in the white suit. Grace fingers his
stache whilst sucking on her lollipop.

MAN IN WHITE SUIT
I'm to be your partner in crime.
Is that what this is all about?

Grace half-nods; smiles; plays with the man's hair.

MAN IN WHITE SUIT (CONT'D)
Well in that case,
I've got some demands.
(beat)

You - or we - need to do some NICE pranks
every now & then - you know. That
shouldn't be too hard. Like a suitcase
full of money falling from the sky for a
little old lady. Or just helping old
ladies cross streets, I dunno. You're not
all evil, are you?
(beat)
Or are you?

GRACE

Of course not. Nice pranks are fine every
now & then. They're totally in my
repertoire...but I don't like old ladies.

MAN IN WHITE SUIT

Fine, no old ladies. But...

Grace kisses the man in the white suit.

MAN IN WHITE SUIT (CONT'D)

Trickster-demon-chick, are you trying to
seduce me?

2nd Grace appears in bed on the other side of the man in the
white suit.

3rd Grace appears in the doorway. She quickly drops her clothes
to the ground & walks in her underwear towards the bed.

Fade out.

So Many Cats, So Few Recipes

Once upon a time there was a sleek feral stud of a cat named Schlomo. His favorite thing in the whole wide world was the moment before sexual submission with grade-A prime princesses, when they would do their best to act like they didn't want it, & then, inevitably, gave into the Schlomo-love.

Schlomo was named by two stoned philosophy students when they picked him up in the Post Office parking lot. The stoners happened to each have Jewish mothers.

Eldon & Escher, the two stoner-philosopher-kings, had each just purchased a tuna sub sandwich & they lured Homo away from his sexcapades with the bland, mercury-laced processed fish.

* weeks pass *

Eldon & Escher tire of Schlomo's antics; his violence, really. Eventually they trade him to their drug-dealing friend in exchange for a sippy cup of LSD. Not a full cup, more like half.

"The sippy cup is half full," says Escher.

"The sippy cup's half empty."

Thorstein "Fuzzy Bud" Vorstadtler is Schlomo's new, drug-dealing owner. He plans on making a stew out of him.

* cut to the boiling water in the big metal pot on the stovetop *

Fuzzy Bud goes to dip Schlomo in the steaming pot of boiling water & Schlomo's all like droll & all "I saw this on Bugs Bunny."

Fuzzy Bud fake-laughs out of courtesy.

Schlomo's half in the pot of boiling water. Fuzzy Bud pushes, but the cat's legs are strong & clinging to the rim of the pot.

"Give me one second here. Can't a cat get a few last words any more?"

Fuzzy Bud acquiesces; he allows Schlomo to sit on the counter. Gives him a Camel Light.

They smoke. Fuzzy Bud keeps his automatic assault BB-gun rifle aimed at Schlomo the entire time.

"Back when I had testicles," says Schlomo the cat, "everything I did was about the pussy. I traveled a lot; wrote about all these cool little alleys downtown - had it all mapped out - but since I've started seeing Dr. Roberts, & the yoga, I can't

forget the yoga - I realized I never did anything for myself. Dr. Roberts asked me to think of the ultimate reason behind my actions. I thought of everything I did: all the working out, all the preening & licking my asshole once a week & it was all, without exception, just to get laid by as many different queens & princesses as possible. Worst of all, I didn't discriminate. I literally wanted to fuck as many of them as possible—”

* a feral cat in a back alley wails * _caterwauls_

“Give me that,” Schlomo says, seizing the gun from Fuzzy Bud's limp wrist.

His approach in the alley is discreet; Schlomo knows this bitch she done did him wrong before...way before...

He rights that wrong by putting a cap in her ass. Drops the gun like Al Pacino in *The Godfather* & is off into the darkness of the night, to find a bite to eat & some pussy before he passes out.

My American Dream

i wanna get rich so i can hire some construction fellers to construct for me two life-sized & exact replicas of the World Trade Center Buildings - then i want to remote control torpedo each of the buildings with, let's say, a 757 jet plane or two or five - then give it a few hours - maybe even a day - torpedo it with another 757 & then maybe some more & we'll just have to see what happens - sure, that many billions of dollars might be better utilized by the species in feeding our hungry &/or sharing the bounties of 21st century earth with them & all - but i don't know - sometimes - maybe, just maybe - it might be time for this hypothetical multi-billionaire version of myself to consider emptying his vaults in order to feed y'all's heads instead of y'all's mouths - feeding mouths doesn't seem to have gotten us very far in the USA has it now? - my american dream is simply this: to crash seventeen motherfucking planes into some motherfucking (empty) steel skyscrapers & see if they fucking fall or not - my guess is that they w –